

Noble Intentions

by Ranschaj

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Summary: Reach was a disaster, but not all is lost. A team of Spartan's has survived and intends to return to the UNSC, only to find themselves in a strange new world.

1. Chapter 1

****Another new story? What's going on here!? At least this one had some warning behind it, what with all the author notes on my other stories. I'd like to start this story off with a promise, this story will take an entirely new direction to the Halo/Marvel crossover. There won't be any getting all buddy-buddy with the heroes, no great reveal, and certainly no word for word cut outs from other peoples work. Instead there will be tensions between the Spartans and heroes, secrets on both sides, and an entirely original plotline, or at least not entirely ripped off plotlines.****

****Don't be confused, however, the premise is the same. Halo encounters slipspace malfunction, ends up in Marvel, but I promise that is where the similarities end. This chapter will be Noble Team arriving in the Marvel universe, not really spoilers telling you that, it's fairly obvious. ****

****As for pairings, send in your suggestions, but only for Kat, Jun, and Jorge. I already have pairings worked out for Carter, Emile, and Six, so please, no suggestions for them.****

****I feel as though I should warn you, I don't really know that much about Marvel storylines. I know plenty about the characters, their abilities, even their origins, no clue about previous Marvel storylines like M-day or anything like that. That said, I will be doing my best to make sure all of the characters are current. If you see me getting off track, tell me!****

****Well I got nothing else, make sure to leave a review and enjoy the**

story, or don't enjoy it, maybe just appreciate the text. I don't know why you people read these stories.**

The first thing Jorge noticed about the afterlife was how it looked an awful lot like the interior of a Covenant corvette. The purple walls and smooth surfaces making the alien room somewhat pleasing to the eye, unless you stared at it too long, in which case your eyes began hurting. The Spartan II Commando was confused, why was he wearing his MJOLNIR in the afterlife? Why did this place smell so badly? Why were the floors so slick?

Jorge considered his fate, inside of a Covenant ship? Probably Hell. He looked down around his feet, dead Covenant everywhere? Starting to look like Heaven. His stomach grumbled and his eyes narrowed; no food? Definitely Hell.

Jorge turned around and was greeted by the sight of a beat up pelican. The seven and a half foot tall armored titan sighed, he wasn't dead, but he was in Hell. He walked around the pelican to take a look out of the hangar bay, and on the way got a look at the slipspace bomb he had detonated only a few minutes before. The large piece of equipment looked beat up, even more so than it had before he fired it. The normal smooth grey of the casing was charred black, sparks were flying from exposed circuitry, and the normally spinning centrifuge was no longer spinning, in fact it was no longer on the axle it spun on, but resting at the bottom of its cage.

The Spartan just shook his head as he turned to look out of the hangar. Though the thin blue line of plasma keeping the air in could have blocked out a few, it could not have blocked out all of the stars. Jorge looked out into the pitch black, straining to see something, anything, but came up empty.

So, we're still in slipspace, he thought to himself. Noble Five turned to his right and started heading for the bridge, hopefully to find some way out of this place, when his foot kicked something. Cocking his head as he saw what it was, Jorge leaned down and picked up the helmet he had discarded before tossing Noble Six off of the ship.

He picked the expensive piece of super dense titanium and incredibly advanced electronics. Jorge stared into the visor, looking over his own reflection. The thirty year veteran of war looked old. Not in the face, his face was still relatively smooth, excepting the scar across his eye, but it was his eyes that made him look old. Tired hazel eyes stared at their reflection in the maroon mirror.

Sighing once more, Jorge turned the helmet over and slid it over his head. He was immediately greeted by a series of flashing images, showing the Spartan that it was hooking up with his armor. As soon as the final diagnostic screen disappeared from Jorge's visor, a golden glow appeared around his armored figure, growing in intensity until finally disappearing from the visual spectrum. On his visor, a bar at the top filled up as the shields returned to full strength.

"Dot, you still there?" Jorge said, seemingly to no one.

Inside the helmet, a monotone, almost feminine voice responded, "Indeed, Noble Five."

The Spartan walked through the purple corridors, kicking the dead elites out of his way, "Any thoughts on the situation?"

"Situation, Noble Five?"

"Why are we in slipspace?" Jorge asked again, "Why weren't we atomized like we should have been?"

"Unknown at this time, however there are several theories available," Dot replied in its monotone.

"By all means, lay em on me."

Jorge passed another plasma window, this one directly behind three giant plasma turrets, probably the ones that took down the Savannah, "The most likely reason we are in slipspace is that the drive did, indeed, work perfectly."

Jorge reached a door, bridge on the other side, but it refused to open. He reached behind his back to the massive pack he always carried around, and grabbed a massive two foot titanium knife from the left side with his right hand. He slammed the knife into the crease of the door, and pried it open a few inches.

"What do you mean, 'worked perfectly'? It didn't work perfectly, it burned up as soon as it fired!" the Spartan asked. He put a hand on each side of the crease, on top and bottom, and started forcing the door back.

"Indeed, but it did send us into slipspace. However, due to the drive's failure, we are stuck, and cannot exit without the use of another slipspace drive."

Jorge grunted as he pushed harder, forcing the door all the way back into its recesses, and allowing him access to the bridge, "Can we use this ship's slipspace drive?"

"Unknown, but highly likely," Dot replied as her Spartan host moved through the corvette's bridge. The super soldier stopped and knelt down next to a body, though not just any body, this one was wearing green digital camouflage, and he was human.

Jorge reached down to the marine's eyes, closing them, "Rest in peace, trooper."

Looking around the bridge he saw the bodies of three other troopers. One was in relatively good shape, other than the plasma bolt that had burned straight through the BDU and the man's ribcage. Another trooper's face was next to her feet, having been cut in half at the waist with an energy sword. The last trooper's chest cavity had exploded outwards, the pink shards indicating a Type 33 Guided Munitions Launcher, otherwise known as a needler, as the cause of death.

Jorge hadn't questioned Noble Six when he returned alone, the Spartan II never expected the marines to survive the mission. Even ODSI's wouldn't have been likely to survive the onslaught. Close quarters against elites, suicide grunts, even jackals, was something no one but a Spartan would have survived. Elites were too fast, agile, and strong, really strong, capable of overpowering even Spartan II

Commandoes, excepting two.

Sam-034 was often hailed as the strongest Spartan to ever live, capable of lifting over a full ton even out of his armor, but he had never had time to grow into his capabilities, dying when he was only fourteen. Jorge, on the other hand, had had time to grow into his abilities. As the Spartan II's grew, their augmentations grew with them, making them stronger and faster, and Jorge had grown so much.

He lifted weights on a regular basis, even with the war going on. If he didn't sustain any injuries during a battle he would always seek out the ship's weight room, near the gravity centrifuge and get a pre-cryo workout. The last time he was in one he was capable of lifting just over two tons without his armor. To put that into perspective, if he were to try lifting that much weight with a regular steel bar and lead weights, the bar would have to be two feet longer on each end, and would snap under the weight. The towering Hungarian was forced to find a titanium bar and use specialized osmium alloy weights just so he could actually fit it on a weight rack.

Of course, none of these marines could lift that much weight, and were easily overpowered by the elites. Standing up, Jorge shook his head at the gruesome spectacle. It wasn't just the marines that were brutalized. The four SpecOps elites were almost indistinguishable from each other, having been caught in a nasty trap involving two plasma grenades. The elite general was slumped over a console, except for his head, which was dangling from a few exposed fiber optic cables ripped from the ceiling. The rest of the bodies weren't nearly as bad, but grunts were easy to kill. With no shields, all it took was a couple of shots to the head.

"Alright Dot, how can we access the slipspace drive?"

"If you could integrate me with a console, I can provide you with an answer, Noble Five," came the monotonous answer.

The towering titan stepped over a grunts methane tank and towards the bridge's main control, hopefully the helm controls. Jorge supposed that if any set of controls could activate slipspace, it would be the helm. The Spartan held out his hand, pushing it through the 3D holographic controls, allowing the crystalline titanium gel layer to interact with the console, giving Dot the pathway she needed.

The glowing holographic controls along the entire bridge flickered as the UNSC AI entered the systems. Soon, however, the controls settled back to their constant soft white glow, and the screen above the console Jorge stood in front of began displaying a large diamond with two smaller diamonds in the middle, Dot's preferred avatar.

"Well?" Jorge asked.

"There has been a complication."

"Complication?" the Spartan asked, not liking the implications.

"This corvette has no slipspace drive, Noble Five," came the emotionless reply.

"_What?"_ Jorge asked incredulously, "How the hell does this ship get from place to place?"

"It is likely that it traveled with the parent supercarrier," Dot answered, "but there are several other methods that could be used. Such asâ€¦"

"Dot," the human interrupted the AI's rambling, "Just stop and tell me what the status of the ship is. Are there any survivors?"

"Four engineers are currently attempting to repair the engines."

"Engineers?" Jorge asked, wishing he had grabbed his M247H Heavy Machine Gun. Engineers may not be the most dangerous Covenant, but they were still Covenant.

"Affirmative, Noble Five, internal sensors indicate these to be the only four surviving Covenant aboard this ship, and seven intruders, including yourself, Sierra 052."

Jorge perked up at the news, "Six others? Where?"

"Just underneath the dorsal landing pad, in the main comm. room."

The Spartan was already running through the same route he had taken to get to the bridge. Keying his comm. unit in his helmet he attempted to hail the six unknowns, hoping them to be the pilots and copilots from the saber teams.

"Noble Five to Echo One, do you copy? Noble Five to Echo Two, do you copy?" Jorge passed through the hangar, headed up a ramping hallway to the comm. room, "Noble Five to Echo Four, do you copy!?"

Jorge reached the final door to the primary comm. room, only for it to refuse to open. Rolling his eyes in exasperation, the Spartan once again reached for his massive blade.

"Breaching main entrance inadvisable, Noble Five," a monotonous voice warned him.

"Why?"

"Internal sensors indicate a vacuum environment in the main comm. relay."

"Then decompress my section and open the bloody doors!"

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Jorge tilted his head, "What's taking so long?"

"In my current limited state, I am only capable of operating at 16.7% capacity, Noble Five."

Jorge shifted impatiently before the room was suddenly filled with a hissing sound that ended abruptly, followed by the dead bodies of several Covenant aliens to begin floating aimlessly. The Spartan grabbed a plasma repeater from the cold grasp of an elite ranger, he couldn't take the chance that these weren't UNSC personnel, before turning back to the door.

The door slid open without a sound, due to the vacuum it was currently operating in, and the super soldier stepped through, plasma repeater up. He was immediately met with a welcome sight, humans, six of them. All six of them pulled their weapons up at the sight of the massive Spartan, most of them heaved their shoulders in relief.

Jorge put down his plasma repeater as he neared the soldiers, "Why weren't you answering your comms?"

The lead trooper, Specialist Rodriguez on his EVA suit, tilted his head at the soldier before tapping the side of his helmet his radio was on and bringing his hand across his neck, signaling that his radio was dead. Jorge nodded and jerked his thumb backwards, telling the soldiers to head back. The Spartan didn't want to risk their lives over four Covenant he could take out with ease.

He picked his plasma repeater back up and held it ready before stalking into the comm. room. He stepped out into the arena like room, checking around both corners, finding only the floating corpses of several grunts and one elite ranger. Dot said the engineers were in the engine room, but he wasn't taking the chance that there were cloaked elites walking around. Moving up to the hollow center pillar, Jorge pushed off lightly and grabbed the sides of the floor of the second level, lest he float past the ledge and float off into slipspace for eternity.

Though that wasn't very likely, Jorge realized as he looked up to the dorsal landing pad, only to have his line of sight blocked by a YSS-1000 Sabre. There was plenty of obvious damage, plasma burns, shearing damage, even a hole that could only have been caused by one of Savannah's point defense guns.

He searched the Sabre up and down, looking for any indication of what happened to the fighter and why it was lodged in there like that. There were spots along the circular orifice that was not clogged with debris from the Sabre. Jorge wondered if the six men and women were ever up there, perhaps trying to get back to the Sabres and escape the corvette before the slipspace drive engaged, but dismissed the idea. If they went up there, then they would have died from the Savannah's attack on the corvette or even the Sabres that were rolling around up there.

Something moving on Jorge's motion tracker got his attention. Behind him!

Whirling around the Spartan leveled his plasma repeater at the threat, only to blink in confusion. In front of him was an Engineer, but rather than attacking, or even moving threateningly, it was prying the body of an elite ranger out from a comm. console. The seven and a half foot tall alien floated away from the console and the engineer, touched, the console. Jorge couldn't describe what it was doing but whatever it was, the pinkish purple metal of the

console began warping back into place, and soon the comm. relay was working again.

"Noble Five, internal sensors are showing the comm. relay back online, please explain."

"Dot, I got an engineer in here, fixing up all the damaged circuits and it seems to be disposing of the bodies," Jorge told the AI, "What's it doing in here; I thought they were repairing the engines?"

"My apologies, Sierra 052, I underestimated their ability. The corvette has full engine capability."

"I thought Six trashed the engines?" Jorge asked, "Medusa missile pods should have been nothing left but scrap."

"By UNSC standards, perhaps, however it appears that to engineers these engines were easily repaired."

Flashing lights all around him alerted Jorge to the fact he was surrounded by the floating aliens. Flipping his plasma repeater to aim at the nearest one, he was once again stunned into inaction. The four gas inflated aliens fought the meager weight of the stuck Sabre in the low gravity, forcing it out of the hole and allowing the translucent line of plasma to reappear. The four engineers set the human made fighter down somewhere on the landing bay.

"Dot, do you have eyes on what they're doing?"

"They appear to be repairing the Sabres, all of them."

"How do they know how to repair a human fighter?"

"Unknown at this time, Noble Five, I will inform you as soon as a conclusion has been reached."

Jorge was confused at the behavior of the engineers. He had never actually fought engineers before. Six had mentioned one was in the main hangar when he took it, said it was giving off energy pulses that powered small but powerful energy shields on each and every Covenant within range, except itself. Apparently it had been the lieutenant's very first target, so Jorge's information on this particular species was still limited. Still, it was Covenant, shouldn't they have attacked him and the others? If anything, they seemed to just ignore him and the other UNSC personnel.

Tapping his finger to the side of his helmet, Jorge spoke, "Dot, can you get an atmosphere in here?"

"Affirmative, Noble Five."

"Do it."

"Gladly, Noble Five."

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Jorge shook his head at the slow process, any whole AI would have been done by now, but since Jorge's armor only carried one sixth of her programming; he would have to be patient.

Streams of vapor built up in the corvette's air supply blasted into the room, creating white streams all around the Spartan. Soon the vacuum was replaced with a nitrogen oxygen mix, otherwise known as air.

Jorge looked around the arena like room, sighed, and pushed on deeper into the corvette, intent on rooting out any possible threats.

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After checking the cavernous engine room, the tight aft launch bay, both spacious cargo bays, and finally the orbital insertion ring, Jorge concluded that he and Noble Six had indeed wiped out all of the Covenant here, excepting the engineers of course.

"Dot, you have an update on the engineers?"

The monotonous voice of the AI soon filled his helmet as he began moving back through the engine room towards the comm. relay, "They have finished repairing the Sabres, Noble Five, and have moved into the hangar bay."

Picking up his pace through the comm. room, Jorge yelled angrily at the AI, "Why didn't you tell me they were headed there?"

"Apologies, however my limited state has left me severely underpowered."

"Where are the others?"

"I have directed all UNSC personnel to the bridge," Dot replied.

"What about their comms? Can they get those fixed?"

"Attempting to find solution, Noble Five, I will notify you when one has been found."

"Yeah sure you will," Jorge muttered.

The Spartan finally reached the main hangar, storming down the ramp to look for the engineers. A slight trilling to his left brought his attention to the battered pelican, except it hardly looked battered anymore. The armor plating was still scorched in many areas, but the glass canopy had been entirely repaired, not even a smudge. The two forward mounted thruster gimbals had been trashed. Nothing left but fused together fuel lines and circuits, but now it looked brand new, other than the missing cover piece.

More humming and trilling came from behind the pelican, and Jorge moved to investigate, plasma repeater up. Rounding around a plasma battery, Jorge found himself stunned for a third time as he saw all four engineers pulling pieces off of the blackened slipspace drive, exposing the circuitry, and somehow repairing equipment that should be entirely useless.

The Spartan could see from his position the various tentacles of the engineers split apart at the ends. Splitting so many times that they might even get microscopic, which would explain why each metal plate they ripped off would soon be back to its shiny grey finish after only a few passes with one tentacle. The internal circuitry was also being repaired, and quickly. It wasn't long until one engineer lifted the disk like centrifuge, holding it in place as another quickly began hooking it back into the superstructure of the drive.

Jorge lowered his plasma repeater, as much as he did not want to admit it, these things were no threat. They might work for the Covenant, but Jorge wasn't sure it was out of free will, judging by the charges rigged to their backs and drilled into their bodies.

The Spartan approached the four aliens surrounding the slipspace drive, watching carefully as they put all the pieces back together. As soon as it was put together, the external LED's glowed and the centrifuge started spinning again.

"I'll be damned," Jorge muttered. They had fixed it, good as new if not better than before!

One turned to look at the Spartan, peering at him through the small hole in the confining helmet, and trilled lightly. He tilted his head, and to his surprise, so did the engineer. Rearing back, the engineer copied his move exactly, or exactly as a floating sea slug with six tentacles could.

Jorge leaned forward, the alien copying his movement, and peered into the glowing blue light centered on the confining helmet. He couldn't see anything past the blue light, but he could feel the eyes from the other side.

Far too fast for the engineer to react to the Spartan reached up and ripped the helmet off, revealing a head that was only distinguishable as a head by the six eyes staring back. As soon as the helmet had been removed, the alien reared back, frightened, and hissed. More hissing all around him, Jorge turned to find all of the engineers backing away from him, flushing up the metal plated petals surrounding their gas filled bladders and shuffling them back and forth all while backing off.

Holding up his arms in a surrendering posture, Jorge offered the helmet back to the engineer who hastily snatched it out of his hands, but rather than putting it back on, the alien held it up for its own inspection, before deconstructing it in the same way it had the pieces of the comm. console and the slipspace drive. Looking back up at the Spartan, the floating alien moved closer once again, humming and trilling to the other engineers.

Jorge backed away from the four aliens and started for the bridge, but immediately noticed that they were following him. He stopped to look back at the four floaters, curious as to what they were doing, and found that they stopped when he did. Realizing they were following him, Noble Five shrugged and continued towards the bridge with his new entourage.

As the five moved forward, Jorge took special notice of how each alien would pick up the dead crew members and pile them up. Obviously

these creatures were very strong, able to lift heavy machinery and the gargantuan elites with ease, tossing them into piles like lumpy pillows. They would also repair minor damage along the way, patching up plasma burns left by errant shots, even undoing the dents and ripped away deck plating left by grenades, all within minutes. The Spartan watched all of their repairs with intent interest, fascinated with their speed and efficiency, as well as the pleasure they seemed to derive from the simple acts.

With the constant stops for repairs, it took nearly fifteen minutes to follow the port side pathway, past the guns, to reach the bridge, and when they reached the final door, Jorge held up a hand, hoping the alien's understood what he meant. Apparently they had some rudimentary understanding of human sign language, considering they stopped immediately.

Jorge turned and stepped through onto the bridge, and was immediately greeted by the six other UNSC personnel.

"Sierra!" the lead soldier exclaimed, Specialist Rodriguez, "Glad to see you made it back to us! Is the ship clear?"

"No hostiles are aboard, but there are four others on this ship with us."

Another member of the small group spoke up, Lieutenant Anderson, "Four others? We just picked up three bodies belonging to the marine team, who else was there?"

"I'll get them, but I need you to promise me something first," Jorge's tone was serious, imparting the importance of his request.

Rodriguez looked back at the others, before turning back and nodding, "Yeah sure, we get it, guns down."

Jorge nodded and turned back through the door without letting it close, waved the engineers through. As expected, the combat specialists immediately reached for their weapons at the sight of the floating aliens, prompting a response from Jorge.

"Guns down marines! Put your weapons down!"

"Sir, they're not—"

"I know what they are, Specialist, I also know they're not dangerous. Put. Your. Weapons. Down." Jorge's tone carried with it a certain finality, a finality that the soldiers obeyed, albeit somewhat uncertainly.

Jorge waved the engineers in the rest of the way, "I've been watching these things. They fixed up this ship's engines, the comm. relay, the Sabres, even the goddamn slipspace drive. These things are the only reason we'll be able to leave this place."

The three soldiers still looked unsure, standing between the engineers and the pilots, but they conceded to the Spartan's orders. Jorge looked the six up and down. Specialist Rodriguez was obviously in charge of the armed soldiers, and stood at just less than six feet tall with lightly tanned skin and brown hair and brown eyes. He was

the kind of soldier who would follow orders, but only ones that made sense. The Spartan II's keen eyes could pick out a level of intelligence behind the transparent visor.

The soldier to Rodriguez's left with an MA37 ICWS was shorter than her commanding officer, about five eight, and held her assault rifle with a tight grip and steely determination in her baby blues. Jorge couldn't see much of her face beyond her eyes, due to the fact she was still wearing her helmet, but he didn't need to, Corporal Rayne will follow orders, and wouldn't easily break under pressure.

The other armed individual standing to Rodriguez's right was a little taller, but still shorter than his commander. Corporal Burgess was a thick, barrel chested man with shoulders that made one wonder if the darker skinned man actually had a neck. All of this combined with a devastating M90 CAWS shotgun and a machete running vertically on the left side of his chest plate led Jorge to believe this man loved to look his enemies in the eyes, even if they liked to stare right back. Actually, judging by the scars on his cheek, they've stared back more than a few times.

The three pilots had finally moved out from behind their protectors, allowing the Spartan II to get a good look at them. Like the other group of three present, this group comprised of two men and one woman. Unlike the other group, these three were lightly armed, M6C SOCOM pistols strapped to their thighs. Not an effective weapon against shielded targets like elites, but the smaller size and shocking accuracy no doubt made it a perfect weapon for a pilot in a cramped shuttle.

One of the pilots, Flight Lieutenant Anderson, walked up, arm extended, "Flight Lieutenant Kelly Anderson, glad to have you with us Spartan."

Jorge took the offered hand, surprised that it even was offered, considering he nearly doubled the short woman's height, "Ma'am."

Kelly shook her head at the title, "Please don't call me ma'am," Jorge moved to speak again but was interrupted by the LT, "or sir. I may have the higher rank but uh," she looked around the alien bridge, watching the engineers begin to pile bodies into the corners and repair the consoles with lightning speed, "I defer to you, Spartan."

Jorge nodded gratefully, glad he wouldn't have to deal with a less experienced officer making bad calls, and marched over to the console he had originally plugged Dot into.

"Dot, you still there?"

"Affirmative, Noble Five," the diamond pattern on the console replied.

"Status update on the ship."

Dot paused for a moment, its systems stretched thin with decrypting several systems, but eventually answered Jorge's request, "Internal sensors show all major damage repaired and we are now up to full capabilities. Hacking the controls of this entire ship is taking

longer than expected, but external sensors will be online in three minutes, weapons systems in thirteen, and full use of the comm. relay in twenty three minutes."

Jorge nodded at the console before speaking, "Once you're done with the external sensors, I want you to pause your decryption of the other systems and work on a translator for those engineers."

"Ceasing all other decryption protocols at your request, Noble Five."

"SIR!"

The Spartan II whipped around at the man's voice, finding Warrant Officer Graves near the starboard side window, staring out at the vast black of slipspace, only it wasn't so black anymore.

Jogging up to his side, Jorge stared out the window and nearly lost his footing at what he saw. He should have expected this, if he, the soldiers, and the corvette were still stuck in slipspace, then of course they would be too. Noble Five shook his head in disbelief, hating the cruel facts of life as he stared out at one third of a Covenant CSO Supercarrier.

The eight kilometers of purple and silver was interrupted by great blue plasma flares, suggesting that the transition into slipspace was much harder on the massive ship than it was on the corvette. More bright blue plasma flares bloomed into existence as the ship deteriorated further, rocking the entire superstructure of the supercarrier's fragment.

"External sensors online, Noble Five," Dot's monotonous voice interrupted his and the other six's observation of the dying ship.

"Dot, can you scan that supercarrier?"

"The scan is already underway, Noble Five. Initial results suggest no life aboard."

"No one survived the transition?" Warrant Officer Mayweather, the third pilot, asked the AI.

"It is possible they survived, Warrant Officer, however any survivors would have been killed by the ambient Cherenkov radiation of slipspace that is slowly approaching this location."

All seven humans turned to stare at the monitor displaying the AI's avatar in shock.

Lieutenant Anderson spoke up, rising anger evident in her voice, "And you didn't think that should have been brought to our attention first?"

"Warrant Officer Mayweather's question interrupted the analysis of the supercarrier, but the information was delivered anyway," the UNSC AI defended itself.

Graves then decided to speak up, "Why haven't we been killed?"

Radiation that strong is pretty fast acting."

"It would appear that the slipspace drive has created a large electromagnetic field that is currently holding the radiation at bay. This would also explain why the fireteam's comms are out."

"Anything else you'd like to tell us?" the Spartan of the group asked.

"The translation matrix has been completed and your helmet can be programmed to converse quite easily with the engineers."

Jorge blinked, "That was fast, especially for your 'limited' state."

"It was quite simple. The frequency of the noise and flashes they make translate directly into binary. It would appear that these creatures quite literally speak directly to machines."

The Spartan huffed, at least something finally went right, but there was no way in hell he was allowing his helmet to be programmed to hum, "Corporal Rayne, do you have a data pad on you?"

"Yes sir," the young woman replied, the steely look in her eyes fading a bit looking up at the eight foot tall goliath. She set her rifle down, slinging her rucksack off her EVA suit, and setting it in front of her. After opening the canvas material, she quickly produced a tacpad, offering it up to the giant.

Jorge slid the data chip out of the pad, and started towards Dot's console. Finding a data port that would fit the adaptable technology, he slid the chip in, "Download the translation matrix to the pad, I want anyone to be able to speak to the engineer and the pad will translate, and I want the pad to translate anything it says to English, understand?"

"Completely, Noble Five," Dot replied.

The data chip popped out of the data port, prompting a massive hand to reach down and grab hold of it, before sliding it into the tacpad once again. As soon as it slid in, the blue screen flashed to life and soon enough the translation protocol appeared.

Holding up the data pad, Jorge spoke, "You, No Helmet, come here."

After he spoke, the pad took less than a second to begin trilling, humming, even producing the occasional flash, which immediately got the attention of the one engineer Jorge had actually touched.

Approaching the towering Spartan, the engineer trilled again as it approached, seemingly intrigued.

The pad translated, "_ARE YOU SPEAKING TO ME?_"

Jorge grimaced at the horribly scratchy monotone voice, "Yeah, that's pretty fucking annoying."

The bad began translating, "Ah fuck! You gotta be kidding me. I

didn't mean you are annoying, No Helmet, this pad has an annoying voice."

As soon as the pad was done translating Jorge's voice, the engineer reached out and snatched the pad from him, quickly disassembling it, putting it back together in various configurations, then hand it back to him exactly as it had been before, but far different. On the pad's screen there was a line of text.

We understand your language now; this pad will translate ours into yours.

The Spartan blinked, "Alright, here's the situationâ€|"

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Warrant Officer Graves leaped out of the back of the pelican with a series of fiber optic cables in hand, and began sprinting as fast as he could towards the engine room of the corvette. He passed Corporal Burgess on his way there; the engineers must have sent him back to the pelican for some parts too.

Soon the tall pilot stepped into the engine room where they were installing the slipspace drive and skidded to a halt, or at least tried to. The engine room's gravity had been temporarily shut down by Dot so that the engineers could move the slipspace drive up to the ceiling, closer to the necessary power supply lines. But not close enough if the fiber optic cables Graves was holding meant anything.

The lighter skinned man put his feet up in front of him and hit the railing at the far side of the room. Good thing he did too, lest he get thrown into the massive two story plasma coils powering the ship.

"You alright down there?"

Walter Graves looked up from his horizontal position to see the Spartan hanging from the ceiling, holding several power lines in place for the engineers as they started wiring the slipspace drive into the ship's power supply. The slipspace drive has draped in power lines, the ceiling above it removed so the cables could be pulled down. Large, heavy boxes were bolted to the frame work, converting the power produced by the corvette to power usable from the slipspace drive.

"I'm fine! I've got the cables for you!"

Jorge nodded gratefully, "Toss em up! Then get to the bridge, I already sent Burgess up there!"

The lanky pilot tossed the cable bundle underhanded to the Spartan and made to leave. Before he reached the door, however, he turned and asked, "What about you!"

"I'll be joining you shortly, now move it!"

Walter Graves kicked it in gear at the Spartan's orders, pushing through the doors and into normal gravity, where he immediately fell on his face. He pushed up and ran the six hundred meters to the

bridge.

Jorge watched the young pilot scramble out of the room before pushing himself over to the other end of the mounted slipspace drive and handed the bundle of cables to the engineer at that end. Lighter Than Air hummed in thanks as it unbundled the clear tubing and quickly set to work, connecting one end to the slipspace drive, the other end to the corvette's pre-existing fiber optics lines. The power signatures weren't compatible, but all machines ultimately spoke binary.

"Dot, how long till the radiation hits us?"

"Electromagnetic field weakening, total collapse in three minutes," Dots reply rang in his helmet.

"Lighter, we've got three minutes!"

The engineer turned away from the cables, showing the Spartan that it was done with his work, "Dot, do you have control of the drive?"

"Affirmative, Noble Five, recommend leaving the engine room before the drive is engaged, should it overload."

"This thing overloads we're all dead anyway, engage the drive!"

"Engaging in threeâ€¦"

Jorge leapt from the ceiling, landing with his magnetic boots on the floor. Even if the thing didn't overload, it would still throw off a lot of power, enough to potentially kill the Spartan.

"Twoâ€¦"

The four engineers floated down to the floor with him, all humming and trilling excitedly about something.

"One."

The centrifuge on the slipspace drive spun, picking up speed and throwing off blasts of blue energy. Suddenly the centrifuge stopped and massive shockwave of blue energy blasted through the power lines, racing through the corvette's superstructure and converging three hundred meters off the bow into a massive portal capable of swallowing the ship whole. Stars stared through the portal at the kilometer long Covenant vessel, beckoning the smooth purple ship through and back into real space.

Jorge lowered his hand, having used it to shield his eyes from the intense glare of the slipspace drive, "Dotâ€¦ where are we?"

The monotonous voice of the AI responded quickly, "We are five hundred eighty eight thousand kilometers from Reach, Noble Five, in the exact same spatial coordinates as when we entered slipspace."

"We were in orbit over Reach when the drive went off!"

"That was twelve hours ago, Reach has since continued on its orbit,

Noble Five."

Jorge rolled his eyes behind his maroon visor at Dot's unintentional sarcasm, "I'm on my way to the bridge."

...

"Six you need to neutralize those shade turrets!" an accented voice filled the room.

Catherine B320 stood over a short range comm. system, barking orders to the various assets she had been given for this mission, "Whiskey Three Five hold your position, Six is gonna clear those shades."

"We'll hold, Command, but not for much longer!"

"Understood Whiskey Three Five," Kat replied before cutting off the transmission.

The only female member of Noble Team looked over to the southwest window to another Spartan, Jun A266, who was looking out the window. The bald Spartan wasn't wearing his helmet, showing off a tattoo displaying a fist clenching three arrows over tan skin.

He held up two fingers and gave Kat a nod, "Whiskey Three Seven you are clear for evac."

"Copy, Command, much obliged."

"Six you still have four shade turrets to go," Noble Two reminded Six.

Kat looked out the window nearest her, looking at the two shade turrets blocking pelican Whiskey Three Six from leaving the ONI tower. A UH-144 Falcon swung by the window, thirty millimeter rounds lashed out in bursts, shredding through the armor of the long range shade turrets, leaving nothing but scrap.

One shade turret exploded as its small plasma generator destabilized from the trained fire. One down, one to go and Whiskey Three Six would be clear for take off, but suddenly the Falcon twisted in the air, pulling away from the tower and narrowly avoiding a green blob of guided incendiary gel burning as hot as plasma.

The Falcon spun around and ascended, twin rotors spinning faster and thrusters burning hotter to push the multi ton air craft upwards. The banshee that had fired the fuel rod cannon passed underneath the Falcon and was immediately shredded by one thirty millimeter cannon and two fifty caliber machine guns mounted on the sides. An explosion from the internal plasma batteries rocked the light Covenant air craft and sent pieces flying in dozens of different directions.

A second banshee flew past, attempting to break off and get away from the deadly aircraft, but the cockpit was riddled with bullet holes from the Falcon's main gun. Making sure the smaller fighter was down; Six pulled his Falcon back towards the fourth shade turret, destroying it with a single burst.

"Whiskey Three Six, you are clear for take off," Kat told the

pelican's pilot, "Six you have two last shade turrets, take them down."

"Whiskey Three Five to Command, we're getting a little restless!"

Kat shook her head, "Just two shade turrets to go, Whiskey Three Five."

The female Spartan turned her blue eyed gaze on Jun who was at the other window, looking down on the final two shade turrets. Even from here Kat could hear the cannon roaring, the shades wouldn't last long.

A nod from Jun and Kat was back on the transmitter, "Whiskey Three Five you are clear for take off, have a nice day."

"Much obliged, Command," Whiskey Three Five responded. The Spartans' sensitive hearing could pick up the pelican's engines roaring to life. From the cracked window in front of her, Noble Two was able to watch the huge dropship rocket away from ONI HQ at near supersonic speeds.

"Noble Two to Noble Six, I'm extending the landing pad," Kat told the other Spartan, "Come home, Lieutenant."

The door at the far end of the room slid open, allowing Emile A239 and Carter A259 to enter the room with a small contingent of UNSC Army Troopers. Carter immediately slid his Commando helmet off, telling the troopers to go get some rest and some food before walking over to his group of Spartans.

Emile reached them first, sitting down next to a destroyed console after he flicked the purple blood of a few brutes off his visor. His right hip sported a new addition, a Type 25 Carbine, aka Spiker. The savage weapon fit Noble Four's fighting style perfectly. The massive super heated tungsten spike inspired fear within the enemy, and even if you ran out of ammo, the Spiker is far from useless with two thirty centimeter tungsten carbide blades capable of slicing through the toughest armor the Covenant could offer.

The Spartan's skull faced visor turned his attention to the kukri knife on his right shoulder pauldron, slipping it from his sheath and began sharpening it with only a nod to the other two Spartans in the room. Kat nodded back as she knelt down to work on the long range transceiver. Jun didn't even bother to acknowledge Noble Four other than to make eye contact through the visor, and simply set up underneath a suspended banshee with a pair of highly advanced binoculars, monitoring nearby Covenant forces.

Commander Carter walked over to his second in command, "Building's clear, what's the status of the comms?"

"Noble Six has destroyed all three long range jammers; I'm working on a way to get you a line to Command."

Carter nodded and moved off just as a pair of doors opened up from the opposite side of the room, near where the landing platform was. Noble Six and two troopers stepped through, the two troopers immediately joining their comrades while Noble Six began walking

towards the rest of Noble Team.

Noble Six was typical for a Spartan of Noble Team, standing even with most Spartan II's at seven foot two inches in his MJOLNIR, conservative color scheme, olive and black highlights, and modified equipment. A Mark V [A] helmet with a gold visor, two Kevlar pouches on his chest, two padded leather soft cases on the small of his back and left thigh, two Paratrooper knee guards, and both shoulders covered up by modified ODST shoulder pauldrons.

"Hmph," Jun suddenly said, "This place used to be the crown jewel," the sniper shook his head, "Not anymore. Hey," he said as he finally noticed Noble Six, "You made it!"

"It's a regular family reunion," Emile muttered from his position seated on the floor. Six held out his hand, letting a pair of dogtags hang from his extended arm, "Keep em, he gave them to you; I'll honor him my own way."

Noble Six nodded and tucked the little pieces of metal back into one of the pouches on his chest.

"Jorge always said he'd never leave Reach," Jun said again, either trying to strike up a conversation, or just lamenting the apparent death of his friend in his own way.

"Ehehehe," Emile chuckled somewhat sadly, "the big man _was_ sentimental."

Carter pushed himself off the pillar he had been leaning on, "He gave his life thinking he'd just saved the planet. We should all be so lucky."

Noble One settled next to Noble Three, looking down on several Covenant phantoms picking up troops from a lower rooftop.

Jun looked at Carter hesitantly before speaking again, "Sir, is it true about Gauntlet, Red, and Echo Teams being assigned to civilian evac ops?"

Carter turned on Noble Two, "Those are senior level communicat@s!"

"I hear what I hear, but why assign Spartans on defensive deployments."

"I need that link to Command, Kat."

Kat smiled at Carter's weak evasion, "Working on it, but this console's got more shrapnel than transceiversâ€¦ you didn't answer my question."

"You want to know if we're losing?"

"I know we're losing!" Kat said with a little more heat than intended, but her anger at the situation turned to melancholy, "I want to know if we've lost."

Carter turned away, answering Kat's question without saying anything. Having been serving with the Commander for years, Noble Two could

read him like a book. Carter was like an older brother to the Lieutenant Commander, there for emotional support after the rest of the original Noble Team was killed, and allowing her leeway to grow as an officer.

Suddenly the console the Spartan had been working on sprang to life, crackling with static but a clear voice could be heard. A voice Kat recognized.

"It's Colonel Holland," she said, confused, "What's he doing on an open channel?"

"â€| in the southeast quadrant of the city," Urban Holland's voice came through more clearly, "Noble One, if you are receiving, I am authorizing radio safety override."

Carter leaned over Kat, "How long for a secure link?"

Kat shook her head, "Can't guarantee secure anymore."

"Could the Covenant trace it to us?"

Kat shrugged, "I could."

"Noble One, this is a Priority One hail, if you are receiving acknowledge immediately."

Noble Two's shoulders slumped at that. She picked up a small earpiece linked to the console and handed it to Noble One, "Keep it brief."

"Carter hereâ€| yes sir," Noble Team's leader moved off as Colonel Holland briefed him on new orders.

Jun watched Carter for a bit before turning back to watching the Covenant, only to find something interesting, "We've got movement. Multiple Covenant vehicles vacating the areaâ€| and their in a hurry."

Emile started to stand, using his shotgun as a handle, "How often you see Covvies retreating for no reason?"

Kat nodded in agreement before she saw a datapad flashing in warning. When she picked it up, her eyes nearly jumped out of their sockets, "Radiation flare! Big! Forty million roentgens!"

Carter turned, holding out the earpiece, "I just lost Holland, what's going on!"

"Atomic excitement scrambled the signal. Ninety million now!"

"Source?"

"Airborne, close."

"How close?"

A hellish red beam appeared outside the window, shattering the glass and blasting the room with hot wind.

"THAT CLOSE!"

"To the elevators Noble! Move, move!" Carter barked at this team. He, Jun, and Emile sprinted to the first of two lifts as the troopers had already piled into the main lift. Kat stumbled as she reached for her helmet, but a pair of strong hands helped her up and scooped her helmet off the floor.

Kat reached the second elevator a second before Noble Six. She turned around, snatching her helmet out of Six's hand as she hit the lift controls. Noble Two looked at the olive colored Spartan, noticing the same calm, cool poise he always displayed never cracked, she wasn't having the same ease about it.

"First glassing?" Kat asked, but never waited for an answer, "Me too."

The elevators descended at breakneck speed, the other lift a few meters ahead of theirs.

"Our best bet is a bunker at sublevel two," Kat suggested as she checked the building's schematics, "We get new orders from Holland sir?"

"We're being redeployed to Sword Base," Noble One answered.

Apparently these orders didn't sit well with everyone, though Jun was the most vocal, "Sword? Covenant _own_ it now!"

"That's why Holland wants us for a torch and burn op, keep Dr. Halsey's excavation data from falling into enemy hands."

"If it hasn't already," Kat pointed out the obvious.

The first lift reached its destination, opening up a hundred meters from a heavy set of bunker doors that were still open, displaying the troopers from earlier having already reached safety.

"Maybe, but according to Holland, the Covenant are still searching for something," Carter told the team as he, Jun, and Emile sprinted towards the bunker.

The second lift's doors opened up, allowing Noble Two and Noble Six to exit. As they sprinted across the gap, Kat let her thoughts on the orders known.

"Where does Holland get off calling a demolition a priority one-"

â€|

Juran Rodanee aimed down the holographic scope of his Type 31 Rifle, finding the female demon's head in his crosshairs. Four mandibles covered in serrated teeth curled into a grin and started squeezing the trigger. Just as the trigger reached the firing point, however, the Phantom shook. The needle lashed out but missed the demon's head, instead finding the foul creature's neck, piercing the left side and showering the cement in a spray of blood.

Juran roared in anger, he may have killed the creature, but his shot was interrupted! The nine foot tall Field Marshal turned in anger towards the Kig-Yar pilot and let loose a deafening roar.

The Phantom shook again, and again. The Sangheili leaned out of the dropship, looking for the source of the shaking and found another Phantom, closing fast. Pinkish purple bolts flew from the other dropships main gun, striking the Phantom and causing it to shake.

The Field Marshal roared again before grabbing a fuel rod cannon, aiming it directly at a green colored demon who was dragging his kill into the bunker. The green blob of incendiary gel closed in on the two, flying directly towards the green one's chest. The demon skillfully leaped away from the explosive, but was forced to let go of the blue demon, and when the round hit the cement, the explosion threw the olive colored demon into the bunker just as the doors sealed, leaving the blue one outside.

Roaring again, the Sangheili told the pilot to get them out of there as even more plasma bolts struck the ship. One of the birdlike Kig-Yar looked up at the Zealot nervously, twitching for his Needle Rifle back. Juran looked down at him for a second, contemplating giving the gun back, but instead chose to grab the smaller alien and toss him out of the dropship straight down onto the boiling glass.

â€|

"Anderson, set us down by that hole!" Jorge yelled up to the cockpit. Noble Team's transponders were coming from that hole, unfortunately the glassing beam only seven hundred meters away was keeping Noble Five from contacting any of his teammates, but that wasn't why he wanted down there, that Zealot had been shooting at something, and he wanted to know what.

Nothing could have prepared himself for what he saw. A blue armored female Spartan, lying face down on the concrete and a slowly spreading pool of blood.

"Hold the Phantom steady! I'll be right back!"

Before any of the six others inside the Phantom could protest, the Spartan II leapt from the extended platforms and slammed into the cement, shattering it under his immense weight. The bunker doors were firmly closed, and no force short of a nuclear blast was going to open it up now, but that wasn't why Jorge was there, he was there for his teammate and superior officer Kat, who hadn't made it inside the bunker.

The much, much larger Spartan easily lifted Noble Two into his arms and leaned in closer, attempting to get a better look at the wound. Biofoam injectors had automatically kicked in, but Jorge couldn't tell if the round had punctured the jugular or the bronchial tube, both of which would be lethal. Of course there was a chance that the biofoam injectors had gone too far and was now crushing the bronchial tube.

Noble Five looked down at the pool of blood. There wasn't enough

there to indicate a severed jugular, and it wasn't dark enough to indicate a severed jugular. If Kat hadn't passed out she could tell him herself but obviously the pain had been far too much.

"Spartan!" a voice from the Phantom shouted down to him, "the grounds getting a little hot!"

It was true, the glow from the glass forming around the particle beam was growing brighter, and would soon melt the ground underneath the ONI building itself. One leap to the roof of the bunker, and another to the Phantom's troop bay had Jorge and Kat inside the dropship.

"Lieutenant, get us the hell out of here," Jorge said as he set the female Spartan flat on the floor.

"Sure thing, Sierra, but where too?"

The armored titan leaned back from his position stooped over thinking. They had abandoned the corvette in a field of debris left by scuttled Halcyon cruisers. Some of them were still intact, a couple even had atmosphere in the interior, but a breach in one of the fusion reactors was throwing off too much electromagnetic interference for the corvette's sensors to identify any survivors, but it also meant that the corvette was much harder to detect by other Covenant ships.

"Head back to the corvette once you get me out of the city, until then, keep a low profile. No Helmet and the others were able to disable the transponders on these things, but I don't want to take the chance the Covenant are just gonna let an unmarked Phantom go."

"Sure thing, Sierra," Kelly chirped from the dropship's cockpit. Fortunately the Covenant craft was set up for piloting by a Jackal rather than an Elite, had it been reversed, Lieutenant Anderson may not have been able to reach the controls. It was rather fortunate, actually, that she had run a simulator on the Type 52 dropship beforehand, considering no UNSC craft was going to get around undetected.

The craft weaved through the forest of skyscrapers, avoiding other Covenant ships as it quickly dashed towards the outskirts of New Alexandria. Jorge continued to kneel over the prone form of his Lieutenant Commander, attempting to further assess the damage the needler round had caused to her neck.

Trying a new approach, Jorge pried off Kat's helmet, revealing her tanned face that held a few scars, but certainly didn't detract from her looks, as a certain whistling Corporal could attest to.

"Burgess, shut up," the Spartan II ordered, an order that was immediately obeyed. Jorge picked the helmet up and pressed two fingers to the slot in the back of her head, "Dot, are you still in there?"

"Affirmative Noble Five," two monotonous voices answered serendipitously. Both the AI in his suit, and the AI in Kat's helmet answered him at the same time.

"UNSC AI ADT 6849-9 assigned to Spartan Catherine 320 of Beta Company, I want to know how badly Kat's injuries are."

"A Type 31 Rifle round entered through the back of the neck and exited out of the front, however damage has been minimal for this kind of injury," the AI inside the blue Aviator helmet replied through the speakers.

"What kind of damage? Will she live?"

"Severe muscle damage on the left side of the neck, minor blood vessels have been severed, however both the jugular and bronchial tube are intact. It is unlikely she will survive without medical attention, but she her condition is not currently critical."

A voice cut into the conversation Jorge was having with the second of six fragments of Dot, "Sir, you gotta hear this!"

Setting the injured Noble Two against a closed bay door, the Spartan II moved up to the cockpit, "What is it Warrant Officer?"

Travis Mayweather hit a few glowing holographic controls, "We're just exiting the stratosphere and there's a heavily damaged Marathon above us. Looks like all of the escape pods have been launched, but someone's still alive up there, listen to this."

A new voice filled the small craft, "â€|in range, this is Doctor Elizabeth Sanders onboard the UNSC Saratoga. Iâ€| I think I'm the only one left aboard. I'm not a pilot, and all of the escape pods have been launched, pleaseâ€| I need help!"

Jorge blinked at this new revelation, a doctor exactly when he needed one? Perfect. Or maybe too good to be true, "Anyone else in range of that transmission, Mayweather?"

Travis twisted a few dials, punched a couple of controls, even twisted a holographic knob before he finally got a holographic projection of the space near the Saratoga, "Just what we feared, Spartan. Three Spirits already approaching the ship, they appear to have full compliments."

"Lieutenant, any chance we can get there first?"

"We won't beat the first two, but I can squeeze past that third one," Kelly replied.

"Do it, any chance to eliminate the Covenant before they can land is a chance worth taking," Noble Five ordered, "Then put us down inside a hull breach close to the medical wing."

"Sure thing Sierra," Kelly said as she pushed the Phantom to its limits, blasting it into high orbit and chasing after three Covenant dropships.

Jorge stepped back into the troop bay, "Graves, stay with Noble Two, if her condition changes in anyway, radio me immediately. Troopers, suit up, we're going inserting directly into a vacuum."

Sergeant Rodriguez spoke up, "Mission?"

"Rescue op. Doctor Elizabeth Sanders is on board a Marathon cruiser, the UNSC Saratoga and will soon be under attack by two, perhaps three Covenant dropships."

Marcus Rodriguez nodded, "We'll be ready sir."

Jorge turned back to the cockpit, "How we coming, Kelly?"

"The two lead Spirits are already landing in the troop bay, but the third Spirit is just now entering weapons range sir!"

"Take it out then get your helmets back on, it's about to get very hard to breathe in here."

The electronic pulsing sound of the Phantom's heavy plasma cannon filled the cockpit as Kelly opened up on the lagging Spirit. One reason Spirits were almost never seen on the battlefield anymore was its lack of maneuverability, meaning Lieutenant Anderson was having keeping with the Spirit and soon the dropship was nothing more than a rapidly expanding cloud of debris.

"Spirit's just a ghost of its former self, Spartan; we're heading in towards a hull breach two sections away from the medbay, about halfway between the Doctor and the Covenant."

Jorge pointed at Graves who was kneeling over Kat's unconscious body, "Remember, any change, anything at all?"

"You'll be the first to know, Sierra," the wiry pilot replied.

"Good, Sergeant, your group ready?"

"Ready and able, sir."

"Lieutenant, drop the door."

As soon as the order came out, the bay doors on each side of the Phantom opened up, revealing on one side a perfect view of Reach's western hemisphere and the other showed a gaping hull breach leading into a corridor with a door on each side that had slammed shut to contain the atmosphere.

Noble Five hefted his modified M247H and shrugged his shoulders, feeling the weight of all the extra ammunition he carried for it on his back, before stepping off the Phantom and floating across the small void and landing in the exposed corridor. Three slight tremors in the titanium deck plating told the Spartan that the others had made it.

Jorge pressed two fingers against a blinking console for a few seconds before asking, "Dot, you in?"

"Affirmative, Noble Five, depressurizing airlock."

The door slid open and the four soldiers stepped in, Jorge taking the lead. As the improvised airlock re-pressurized Jorge began laying down a plan of attack, "Dot find us a suitable location to make a stand and block off all alternate routes for the Covenant. Inform

Kelly to go finish off the other two dropships and to do it quickly, I don't know if anymore Covenant are coming but I don't want our ride out of here hanging out in the open if they do."

The eight foot tall Spartan turned to the trio of UNSC Army Troopers, "I'll take point, Corporal Burgess I want you to find the Doctor and make sure she stays safe. Sergeant Rodriguez, Corporal Rayne, you two with me."

The group wasted no time, as soon as the airlock was open David Burgess split from the group, following Dot's waypoints to the Doctor and Jorge led his team of three through the wide corridors and hallways, intent on finding a good place to set up a defense.

"Spartan!" Burgess' voice flooded through the comm., "I've found the Doctor in the medbay. She's alright if a little shaken up."

"Keep her there, when we're done here she'll have a patient to take care of."

"Yes, sir!"

Jorge, Marcus, and Jessica rounded a corner finding a long, wide corridor that was littered with dead bodies, all human. The Spartan of the group was focusing on the junction they were in, if it could be well defended, but the other two were wrapped up in the bodies.

"How do you think they died?" Jessica asked her Sergeant, "I mean, there's still atmosphere in here."

Marcus shrugged, "I don't know, looks like a couple may have gotten their heads knocked around, butâ€¦"

The two were interrupted by Jorge ripping a door out of its recess and slamming it down into the deck plating, making a wall just big enough to crouch behind and take cover. He tore another door off, this time setting it up against the other end of the hallway.

After he was done he turned to the other two, "They didn't die due to lack of air, or getting their heads knocked around. They died from the heat."

"Heat, sir?" Rayne asked with some confusion.

Jorge pointed towards where they had come from, "Plasma torpedo must have landed a glancing hit, but it was enough to turn the temperature of this room up to nearly four hundred degrees at one point. Lucky for the Doc, medbay's are always buried deep inside the ship."

The other two looked at the bodies with a new found sense of sorrow, knowing that these Navy personnel had had their blood boiled while they were still alive.

"Dot's closing off all other routes, they'll be here soon," Jorge reminded the two troopers, "Sergeant, use your DMR to pick off the jackals and any elites we knock the shields off. Corporal, focus on the grunts, and remember, both of you, don't use your grenades, we don't need more hull breaches."

The two nodded and set up behind each barricade with the Spartan standing tall and strong in the middle of the hall, brandishing his M247H menacingly. The giant blast doors at the end of the hall suddenly began sparking up and down its middle seam as the Covenant on the other side began cutting their way through.

"Here they come," Noble Five said, "Hold fast!"

The doors split open and an elite major burst through the smoke, holding twin plasma rifles and bellowing at the trio at the end of the hall. 12.7 millimeter rounds sped down the hall, striking the hulking saurian's shields and finally breaking them.

Sergeant Rodriguez found the elite's head in his crosshairs and pulled the trigger, blowing the blue brain matter back into the cloud of rapidly clearing smoke. As soon as the lead alien fell the hallway filled with plasma bolts of various color. Green and blue bolts struck the heavy steel doorways Rayne and Rodriguez huddled behind.

Jorge's M247H roared in response to the Covenant fire. The elites smashed down the doors to crew quarters, allowing them to take cover in the rooms as six jackals formed a line across the hallway, shields up to block even the heavy machine gun fire and needlers poking around the shields sending the pink shards flying towards the trio of humans.

Four plasma bolts overloaded Jorge's personal shields, followed by two needler rounds shattering against the super dense titanium plates. The Spartan quickly ducked behind the steel door to his left, sitting down next to Corporal Rayne.

"Sergeant, hit those jackals! The Corporal and I will give you cover!"

Noble Five held his heavy machine gun over his head, upside down over the steel barricade and began firing, forcing the four elites back into their cover and the jackals turn their shields towards the massive gun. Jessica stood over the barricade next to the roaring machine gun, aiming at the ground in front of the jackals, hoping to strike their feet.

Rodriguez popped out of cover, finding a jackal not covering his head with his shield, and fired, dropping the bird like alien with ease. He shifted to the next target, then the next, and finally a fourth jackal dropped like a sack of potatoes before the grunts backing the flightless birds forced him back into cover.

Jorge lowered his machine gun and stood up, bringing the M247H to bear again, unleashing a hail of massive slugs into the Covenant and pushed forward. Corporal Rayne backed him up, firing accurate bursts of 7.62 millimeter armor piercing rounds into the head of any grunt she could find.

Marcus couldn't find a target on any of the jackals with the Spartan II blocking his view, but that wasn't a problem for long. Rearing back, Noble Five used the barrel of his massive machine gun as a broomstick, sweeping the two of the bird like aliens off their feet and sprawling onto their back. Jorge didn't waste time with the

jackals, however, and charged the first elite to expose itself.

The huge slugs easily broke the minor's shields but the Spartan closed the distance too quickly for the gun to finish its work, but that's what fists were for. The elite roared as Jorge closed in quickly, and raised his plasma rifle, intent on breaking the 'demon's' skull, but found his wrist trapped in a powerful grip that nearly snapped its bones.

Noble Five dropped his machine gun, choosing instead to bring his left hand into the fray, grabbing the elite by its throat. He smashed the alien's back against his knee, stunning the alien further and shattering its shields, before raising his right elbow and driving it into the elite's exposed stomach. The saurian's breath left him in a rush and was able to provide no resistance when Jorge gripped its head with both hands and snapped its neck.

The experienced veteran grabbed the dead minor's body with both hands on its chest plate and held the body up, blocking the incoming blue plasma bolts with its body. Jorge was forced into the crew quarters the minor had been using for cover by the overwhelming fire, finally ditching the body as he disappeared behind the door.

"Alert, three heat signatures moving through decompressed sections, headed straight for Doctor Sanders," Dot suddenly informed the team.

â€

Corporal David Burgess was watching the only entrance to the medbay that hadn't been barricaded with various busted medical equipment when Dot's alert rang through his helmet.

"Burgess, you copy that?" Sergeant Rodriguez asked.

"Copy that, Sarge, any intel on what the heat sigs are?"

"Relative size and temperature of the three signatures indicates Elite Rangers, Corporal," the AI Sierra had with him said.

"Shit!"

Elite Rangers weren't the toughest elites around, but certainly some of the best equipped, and certainly one of the more crafty classes of elites.

"What is it?" a British accent asked.

David looked to his right, finding a petite woman in a lab coat with a name tag reading Doctor Elizabeth Sanders. Elizabeth, or Beth as she preferred, was a shorter woman, standing around five foot three, with light skin and dark hair lined with silver streaks. The forty something Doctor's green eyes shone with intelligence, but also with a healthy amount of fear at the situation, as well they should.

"We got three elites incoming, Doc," Burgess told her, "Lets get one of these medical tables turned over, we can use it as cover."

David seriously doubted that a medical table would help any,

especially when they could just pop a plasma grenade into the room. No amount of cover would help if that were the case. Of course the giant aliens could just pick the table up, fold it in half, and crush them using their superior strength, but thinking about the hundreds of ways three elites could kill one trooper and one unarmed doctor wouldn't help.

The Corporal would have to plan the battle carefully, try and take out at least one before any had a chance to shoot back. His eight gauge M90 CAWS should help with that, the weapon was designed to punch through shields and light armor in one shot, provided you were close, like, really close. Burgess smiled, he loved it when the enemy was in his personal space, it was why he always picked the shotguns, and why an eighteen inch carbon steel machete was vertically sheathed upside down next to his chest plate.

The medical table was set parallel to the door, on its side so the doctor could take cover behind it while Burgess would be taking cover behind an extending locker next to the door, allowing him the proper range to kill at least one elite as they walked through the door.

"Doc," David got Beth's attention, "You'll need this."

The dark skinned man held out an M6G PDWS handle first, much to the Doctor's shock.

"Iâ€¦ I'm a doctor, not a soldier!"

"You don't need to hit anything, Doc," Burgess assured her, "You don't even need to look where you're shooting, just distract them. I'll take care of the rest."

The small woman reluctantly grabbed the pistol and ducked down behind the overturned medical table.

"Warning, heat signatures just outside medical bay," Dot warned them.

"This is it Doc! Remember what I said!"

CLANG!

â€¦

There were guttural murmurings from behind the heavy door as the elites decided what to do, and briefly Burgess wondered if the door was going to hold. But those hopes were quickly dashed.

CLANG!...SMASH!

The thick steel door slid along the ground and stopped a few feet from the Doctor's cover where a pistol appeared upside down and began barking.

The first elite stepped through, returning fire against the surprisingly accurate Doctor. That was probably why he never saw a short, stocky human male step out from behind an extruding locker with a shotgun.

BOOM!

Two positive hits by the Doctor had weakened the elite's already weaker than normal shields, making it easy for the eight gauge buckshot to rip through and turn the alien's head to confetti.

Burgess pumped the shotgun and knelt down. Just in time too as the second elite stepping through the doorway ignored the Doctor completely, turning towards the Corporal and unleashing a hail of plasma that simply sailed over his head.

BOOM!

The buckshot smashed the alien's shields, but only scratched the superior metal of the elite's combat harness. The huge saurian took advantage of the time it took David to pump his shotgun, lunging forward with an activated plasma dagger and an ear shattering roar.

Most people would try and lean away from a melee attack, but that almost always plays right into the hands of the elites' superior reach. Fortunately Burgess was an accomplished close quarters combatant, and instead of dodging, the trooper lunged.

His two hundred and twenty pound frame wrapped around the alien's massive thigh, causing the elite to stumble and causing it to miss. The creature roared again, grabbed the Corporal with its left hand and threw him away.

Meanwhile the third alien took cover behind the doorway, waiting for the Doctor to stop firing her pistol. As soon as the sound stopped, the seven and a half foot alien burst through the door, firing its plasma repeater at the medical table. The mattress stuffing vaporized on contact, but the tough steel underneath held out against the incredibly hot rounds, keeping the Doctor alive, but not for long.

The ranger that Burgess had been fighting charged him, plasma dagger out. David reacted on instinct, using a subconscious reaction basic training had honed into the trooper, he grabbed the eighteen inch carbon steel knife from its vertical sheath and held it out in front of him like a lance at the last second. It was too late for the alien to do anything, its considerable mass was already committed, and with no shields and weakened armor, it never stood a chance against the long knife.

Blue blood flowed over the Corporal's Kevlar covered hands as the alien buried the knife inside its vulnerable chest. The elite snarled silently at the trooper, but it didn't last long before it slumped and fell off the knife.

A not so silent snarl reminded Burgess he was not alone, and the Corporal snatched his shotgun from the ground nearby and rose to his feet as he pumped a new round into the chamber. David never fired, however, because as he found the elite, he found it holding a plasma dagger to the Doctor's neck, using her as a human shield.

"Funny," David panted, still a little out of breath from his brawl

with the other elite, "I thought you guys had a sense of honor!"

"You have fought well, human," the elite surprised the two humans by speaking in very guttural English, "Surrender now and both of you will die quickly!"

"Holy shit!" David exclaimed, "You fuckers speak English? Well since you can understand me, put the lady down!"

The elite laughed at the human's gall, but because of this, he did not notice the Doctor move in his grip and grab a syringe out of her lab coat's pocket, "You are brave human! It is too bad you are also vermin- AGH!"

The giant alien dropped Beth when she plunged the syringe into his unshielded hands, and Doctor Sanders immediately curled into a ball on the floor, allowing Burgess a clear shot.

BOOM!

The hulking saurian was tossed back by the force of the shot, crashing against another medical bed, crushing it underneath its weight and drowning it in metallic blue blood.

Doctor Sanders looked up from the fetal position, sighing in relief when she found no one standing over her.

"Doc, you ok?"

"Quite alright, Corporal, no can someone please get me off this bloody ship!"

â€|

Three hours later the Phantom detached itself from the hull of the Marathon cruiser and blasted towards a field of debris, this time with an extra passenger.

"I'm still not comfortable with moving her this short after surgery, even if it was minor," Doctor Sanders said as she continued to hover over her patient.

"Don't worry, ma'am, Kat's a tough girl," Jorge assured her.

Beth smiled at the huge man's accent. It was difficult to tell if he was calling her ma'am, or mum, though from what she has observed from the huge man so far, she didn't think there was much of a difference. He had hovered over the smaller Spartan like a worrying father, or perhaps an older brother, fretting over any small detail that was out of order. His personality was a stark contrast to the man whom she had first seen, a massive eight foot tall armored titan holding a two foot long machete that was still dripping with blue blood.

"I know she's a tough one, the arm was all the evidence I needed," Doctor Sanders pointed towards the robotic arm, "but there is still the chance of infection, though I'd like to see any bacteria attack _this_ immune system."

"We're approaching the corvette now so buckle up, cause I don't have

any real clue as to how to land this thing," Kelly called from the cockpit.

Beth blanched, "What do you mean you can't land this thing?"

"Well I can pilot it around, perform complex maneuvers, but I've never had any reason to learn how to dock one, here we go!"

The corvette was exactly as the seven had left it, engines shut down, life support on minimal, and engineers happily at work repairing any and all damage. It appeared that they had even been repairing or replacing entire sections of the armor plating, considering the gashes left by Savannah's point defense guns were gone all along the hull.

The shield controls had never been turned back on after the Phantom had left, making it easy for the dropship to get back in, unfortunately Kelly still had to learn how to dock the ship. The Lieutenant skillfully turned the craft towards the cradle they had taken it from and slowly approached.

"Mayweather, see if there's anything on those controls that will initiate the docking clamps," Kelly asked her subordinate.

"Yes ma'am," the pilot replied as he reached forward to the controls. A few knobs, a few buttons, a few dials, finally the docking arms reached out and grabbed a hold of the Phantom, dragging it back into the cradle.

"Ladies and gentlemen I'd like to thank you for flying Skyjacked airlines, we know you have a choice in stolen Covenant vehicles and we thank you for your continued business," Anderson said over the comms.

Smirking at the pilot's joke, Jorge picked up his teammates still unconscious body and stepped out of the dropship onto the docking ramp that led down to one of the hangar's various platforms, "I'll find somewhere for Kat to lay down, then we'll figure out our next move."

"Hey, Spartan!" Rodriguez called from behind him. Noble Five turned around to regard the Sergeant, "What about the fleet?"

"Fleet's been smashed. Sure there are pockets of fighting, but there's almost no UNSC controlled space over Reach anymore, and the Covenant have already started glassing the planet. There's no way we'll get past the Covenant fleet, regardless of what we're riding around in, and even if we did, any UNSC ship would shoot us down on sight."

Jorge sighed before continuing, "Our best bet is to hold tight until Noble Two's alright, and then we'll figure out what to do. I'll integrate both fragments of Dot into the corvette, should be a little faster than last time."

Jorge turned away from the six soldiers, the Doctor following closely to keep an eye on her patient, well aware of the devastated looks on their faces, and knowing it was on his as well. Destroying that supercarrier meant nothing, other than it gave the Covenant the excuse to send their fleet in early. The Spartan thought that he had

made a difference, and he had, but not for the better.

â€|

A full week later and the fires in New Alexandria had fully died, but Noble Team had long since abandoned the ruins. Halfway across the continent a small landing pad jutted out from a cliff face, holding two D77H-TC Pelican class dropships and five humans.

"Doctor Halsey, Jun will escort you to CASTLE Base," the blue armored Spartan, Noble One, said to the frail looking old woman.

"I require no escort, Commander," Doctor Halsey assured the Spartan, to no avail.

"Noble Three, make sure nothing falls into enemy hands."

The first of two olive colored Spartans nodded, "I'll do what's necessary sir! â€| Good luck."

"You too, rifleman," Carter told Jun before turning towards the Pelican Noble Four and Six were already sitting on. Placing his DMR on a weapons rack above his head he sat down at the Pelican's controls, "I need a heading Dot."

"At three kilometers north, turn right, heading zero-five-zero," the 'dumb' AI directed.

"Which leads to?"

"The ship breaking yards in Azsod. The only off-planet extraction site left on this continent. Small scale air strikes have destroyed multiple convoys en route. An armada of Covenant cruisers has hastened to the sight as well. UNSC cruiser, Pillar of Autumn, is awaiting your arrival."

"So around four Covenant cruisers, an unknown number of Covenant aircraft, and a standing army between us and the Pillar of Autumn?" Emile asked, "Shouldn't be a problem."

"Wouldn't be a Noble mission if it were easy," Carter agreed with Noble Four.

Six was reloading his SRS 99 Anti Materiel as he looked out of the troop bay towards the glacier that had covered the alien ruin. A series of explosives set in the ice pack detonated, cracking the two hundred meter thick ice and causing it to collapse under its own weight and allowing the nearby rivers to flood the cavern.

Across the cavern, another Pelican was speeding away from the site, heading in nearly the opposite direction. From this distance, Six's enhanced eyes could just make out a green helmet through the Pelican's canopy.

Turning to Emile, Six asked a quiet question, "Think he'll make it?"

Noble Four's intimidating skull turned to Noble Six's golden visor, "He's got a better chance than us. But I know what you mean, even if he is annoying; don't like splitting up Noble Team even more."

Six nodded, "He'll make it," he said with confidence, more for himself than anything. All of his career, Spartan B312 had been a Lone Wolf, but the past month of constant fighting with Noble Team had led to a certain, reliance, on his new teammates. He now found that having teammates of equal skill and ability to have a positive effect on him.

"I hope your right," Emile conceded, "I won't accept anyone killing that smug bastard before I get to wipe that arrogant look off his face."

â€|

Kat stood watching one of the engineers hovering over a console, tapping away at the controls. She was still somewhat distrustful of the floating snails, but if Jorge said they weren't hostile, Noble Two would consent to the Spartan II's superior experience.

"Commander!" one of the pilots of Echo Squadron grabbed her attention from the other side of the bridge, near the comm. console, "Dot's got the translation matrix figured out, and we're picking up chatter from all over the place but it looks like they're really interested in something over Azsod."

"Dot, what's in Azsod that they could be after?" Kat asked the AI that was currently plugged into the corvette.

"Scans indicate two factors for the increased attention," Dot replied, much faster than it had been only a week ago now that it was up to one third operating capacity, "The first is a Halcyon class cruiser registered UNSC Pillar of Autumn, and the other is three Noble Team transponders en route to its location."

Kat perked up at the sound of that, walking directly over to the three dimensional holographic representation of the planet, looking at the part of the planet that represented Azsod. She tried several different techniques to enlarge the area, but none of them worked, she was about to give up when an engineer approached, grabbed the highlighted section, and simply expanded it.

Noble Two narrowed her eyes at the engineer, a little angry with herself for not trying that, and a little jealous of the alien's incredible skill with technology.

"Dot which transponders am I looking at?" Kat asked as she stood next to the holograph. The advanced technology showed a series of canyons leading to the ship breaking yards, and a pelican flying among them while it was being chased by three Covenant aircraft.

"Noble One, Four, and Six are all aboard that pelican, Noble Two."

"What happened to Jun?"

"Noble Three is en route to Castle Base."

"What's going on?" a deep, accented voice rumbled through the bridge.

Kat turned around to face the newcomer, "Jorge, we've located the rest of Noble Team. Carter, Emile and Six are headed towards the ship breaking yards in Azsod, Jun's on his way to CASTLE Base."

"Why's he split from the rest of Noble Team?"

"Can't answer that, but he appears to be safe for the mom--"

An alarm klaxon blared through the bridge, cutting off Noble Two in the middle of her sentence. Dot quickly provided a reason for the alarm, "Alert, enemy vessel approaching debris field."

"Enemy vessel? What class?" Kat asked as she brought the holograph back to the full view of reach before zeroing in on their location in the debris field.

"Punitive heresy class vessel, three abominations aboard," Dot replied.

Every human on the vessel turned towards the holograph in confusion. Noble Two cocked her head, "Dotâ€¦ give me a view of that vessel."

"Gladly, Noble Two."

The three dimensional holograph zoomed in on a speck maneuvering outside the debris field, apparently attempting to use it as a shield from other ships. The first thing Kat noticed about the vessel was that it most definitely was not Covenant, in fact it looked like a civilian transport vessel.

Kat worked her jaw in frustration, "Dot, stand down alert status," her robotic hand worked her temples, "And rewrite the damned database!"

Jorge leaned in closer, "Ma'am, that things FTL drive is busted and their leaking atmosphere."

"You think we should help them, Noble Five?"

Jorge nodded silently, the big man's hazel eyes held a certain worry for the civilians in the transport.

"Get Lieutenant Anderson in a pelican, go with her, and take Rayne too," Kat conceded.

"Thank you, ma'am."

"And Jorge," Noble Two added, "You have fifteen minutes, then we're taking this thing down to Reach and finding the rest of Noble."

â€¦

"Civilian transport Zulu Niner Niner, this is Pelican Bravo O Two Niner, respond," Kelly radioed the civilian transport.

"Pelican Bravo O Two Niner!" a frantic voice flooded through the comm., "Thank God! We thought we were going to die out

here!"

"You're lucky Zulu Niner Niner; we've got a ship hiding in the debris field, if you'd like to follow us through!"

"Uh, sure thing Bravo O Two Niner, what kind of ship is it?"

"You'll see soon enough, Zulu Niner Niner," Kelly smirked, knowing the civilians were in for one hell of a surprise, "Follow me in closely please."

The larger transport followed the pelican in to the debris field, avoiding the drifting chunks of titanium armor plating, but only barely. The ships thrusters were outdated and in desperate need of an overhaul, some of them were simply gone, forcing the ship to overload adjacent thrusters and making the transport a little sluggish. It took nearly seven minutes to traverse a little over four kilometers to the center of the debris field, where the corvette was holed up.

"What the hell is that thing doing in here?!"

"Zulu Niner Niner, calm down! That corvette is our ride!" Kelly shouted over the comms, trying to be heard over the sound of the other pilot's panicking.

"W-what do you mean that thing's your ship?"

"Trust me; there are no hostiles on that ship. Your transport should be able to fit inside the main hangar, but it'll be a tight fit, think you can do it?"

"Uh... sure Bravo O Two Niner, I can pull that off. Following you in then?"

Lieutenant Anderson nodded, though the other pilot couldn't see her, "That's right, nice and steady."

The Pelican entered the hangar first, leading the larger transport, and kept going through the hangar until reaching the opposite end. The transport wasn't far behind, bearing a striking resemblance to the old Concord style jets of the twentieth century, the nose fit in quite easily, it was the wings at the back that would have trouble fitting through the hangar doors. As the back wings approached the doors, there was a moment when an observing Noble Two thought for sure the wing mounted thrusters would be ripped off the ship but the pilot of the transport knew what he was doing, and skillfully slipped the rest of the ship into the hangar, bringing the heavily damaged ship to a graceful landing.

The hatch on the side popped open, letting forth a cloud of smoke that was quickly dissipated by the corvette's sophisticated ventilation systems. A dirty figure appeared in the open space and quickly climbed down the ladder welded onto the side of the transport, followed by another, and another, finally all three had reached the floor.

Kat observed the three civilians, one male, the other two were young women, and all three were dirty. The two women were of similar build, but that's where the similarities ended. One of them was wearing a

Misriah Armory uniform, the coloration and configuration suggested she was a technician, of what Kat couldn't be sure, but she stood at five foot four, curly black hair, and skin that was dark for reasons other than ash.

The other woman was an inch taller, but with straighter and lighter hair and skin. Her clothing was indicative of an engineer on a civilian freighter. Both women seemed to still be in a state of shock, most likely the three had boarded the transport at the last possible second, Covenant only seconds behind. It was a miracle they had survived at all, a miracle that was no doubt supplemented with a little bit of ingenious piloting by the pilot.

Speaking of the pilot, the young man held a certain experience about him. The young Scott held himself with some confidence, but seemed a little deferent, especially when he noticed Kat standing there observing him. The man's green eyes seemed to go a little wide as soon as he saw the Lieutenant Commander, and he ran a hand through his fiery hair.

"Hello ma'am, uh, what do you need?"

Kat tilted her head at the man, "I need someone with experience piloting a thousand ton plus starship, and I want to know if that is that you?"

The man seemed taken aback but quickly adopted a smile, "Pilot this beauty? Aye, lass, I'm your man!"

"Don't call me lass," Kat warned the young man, "Jorge, lets get to the bridge! You too!"

"Patrick Bullock, ma'am!" the Scott replied, his accent becoming more pronounced as he became more comfortable. Jorge and Corporal Rayne were approaching when Patrick took notice of the young Jessica Rayne, "Can I call her lass?"

Noble Two shrugged, the Scott's behavior was rapidly becoming eccentric, much different from the nervous voice she had heard over the comms.

Patrick approached the Corporal at an angle as they were approaching the main path to the corvette's bridge, "Ay there lass, perhaps a pretty lady like you might escort me to the bridge?"

Rayne arched an eyebrow at the man, wishing she hadn't left her helmet back on the Pelican, maybe she wouldn't be getting the same attention from him. But, considering her MA37 held in her arms did little to dismay the self-confident Scott.

Jorge and Kat followed at a distance after Noble Two had ordered Lieutenant Kelly to escort the two women to Doctor Sanders. The two Spartans followed the pair at a fair distance, Jorge chuckling lightly at the brash attitude displayed by Patrick towards Jessica, while Kat just shook her head.

Jorge turned away from the pair in front of them and looked to Kat, "Ma'am, any update on Noble Team?"

"Carter, Emile, and Six are still being pursued by Covenant craft.

The Covenant Battle Net has indicated a total of twelve banshees and two phantoms have been destroyed by them, and their sending more. Still, we should go after Jun first."

"What's happening to Three?" the giant Spartan asked, concerned for his chatty friend.

Kat sighed, "Two CRS light cruisers are zeroing in on his position. Looks like he's trying to get back to Noble Team."

"I thought he was headed to CASTLE Base?"

"He was, only spent five minutes there before leaving again," Kat told the larger Spartan, "I don't know why he went to CASTLE, but whatever the reason he's done there now and in serious trouble."

"How are we going to help him? We can't just swoop down and pick up his Pelican, the two cruisers will blow us to bits."

"We're not going to swoop in, we're going to destroy both cruisers before picking up Three," the brilliant tactician replied.

They entered the bridge, just in time to witness Patrick's reaction to the engineer present, Perfect Buoyancy.

"Bloody hell you're one ugly bastard!" Patrick Bullock yelped in surprise as Buoyancy floated up to him, "Or maybe you're very pretty for your kind but Jaysus man!" he turned to look at Corporal Rayne, "What the hell is he?"

"I don't actually know," Jessica admitted, "But they aren't hostile, or dangerous in any sense they just like to fix things and make stuff."

"Stuff? Things? Who are you, Rick Grimes?"

"I don't know who that is," Rayne admitted, "but the kind of stuff they like making is helm station that actually has a chair, and is actually looking out the window."

Bullock took notice of a rather uncomfortable looking chair made out of the same purple metal surrounding him sitting in front of a console lined with all sorts of controls, the most prominent of which was a two handed control stick.

Patrick slapped his hands together and rubbed them in anticipation, "Let's get this baby under way," he slid into the seat, finding it much more comfortable than he imagined, "So Miss, where would you like to go?"

â€

Jun swerved his gunship, avoiding yet another plasma torpedo fired by the trailing cruiser. Noble Three had ditched the Pelican back at CASTLE once he had dropped off Doctor Halsey, choosing to go with the smaller AV-22 Sparrowhawk gunship in the hopes that the reduced profile would draw less attention. In all fairness he was right, he only had one ship chasing him, the problem was that the one ship chasing him happened to be a full fledged starship.

He didn't even have the good fortune of being chased by the larger and more sluggish CCS class of cruisers, instead he found himself being chased by its smaller cousin, the three hundred meter long RCS class cruiser. While it was much smaller, the RCS made up what it lacked in size by sheer maneuverability and speed in-atmosphere, and its ability to deploy troops quickly and efficiently all while taking a beating no corvette could possibly withstand.

At least the RCS didn't carry much in the way of fighters, not that the commander of the ship chasing him seemed intent on launching what aircraft he had. In fact the alien in charge seemed content just to follow the Sparrowhawk through the expansive set of canyons, raining down plasma torpedoes as it went.

Jun swerved the agile craft to the left, shooting down an offshoot of the canyon and causing the cruiser to miss yet again. Noble Three, like any Spartan III, was a capable pilot, but he was no Six, and it wasn't going to be long before that cruiser would destroy him. The Sparrowhawk had no shields, and its armor certainly wouldn't hold up against starship grade weapons.

Dual ducted air fans whined in protest as Jun coaxed a little more speed out of the craft. The Covenant were jamming all long range comms, but Noble Team's transponders were ahead of him, only forty miles away at this point. The gunship's engines were pushed to their limits, but the quick craft was soon travelling at over four hundred miles an hour down the straightaway.

The end of the canyon approached rapidly, and soon the Sparrowhawk burst out into a wide basin that was once filled with water, until the Covenant had destroyed the dam holding the reservoir anyway. The wide area would make it harder for the cruiser to anticipate his movements, but that hardly mattered. In front of Jun's gunship, another RCS class cruiser rose above the plateau, three lateral plasma turrets glowing brightly with power as they prepared to annihilate the Spartan.

Jun's helmeted head hit the cushion behind him as he resigned himself to his fate, but his eyes remained open, intent on greeting death fully alert. It was a good thing too, otherwise he might not have believed what happened next.

A thin blue beam lanced across the sky from a source above the cruiser, slashing through the shields and burrowing its way through the armor and finally striking the ground below. The particle beam only lasted for a few seconds, but the damage it caused would last forever as the cruiser was rocked by secondary explosions. The segmented hull broke apart under the stress of internal explosions and the ship finally fell from the sky.

Noble Three looked up through the canopy, wondering who his saviors could be, and was shocked to see a corvette class ship, belly still aglow after firing its energy projector. The glow only faded for a moment before gathering strength again, slashing out against the cruiser behind him.

Jun looked over his shoulder at the cruiser and found that the CRS had swerved at the last second, not enough to completely avoid the stream of ionized plasma, but enough to avoid total destruction. The

shields of the cruiser popped, and the lance continued through the starboard 'wing' of the smaller ship, but the damage was too isolated to cripple the small cruiser. Fortunately the crew of the larger corvette was prepared for such a situation as the lateral plasma lines flared to life, glowing brighter and brighter until it finally launched three small plasma torpedoes.

The three spots of pure blue light accelerated from the ship somewhat sluggishly before suddenly rocketing towards the cruiser in somewhat random arcs. The first torpedo slammed into the cruiser's own weapons, overloading the plasma collectors and rocking the ship with a devastating explosion, but the ship still hung in the air, wounded but alive. The second and third torpedoes would change that assessment, however, as the second slammed into the thinnest armor section, cutting a hole clean through, letting the third torpedo complete access to the ship's delicate innards.

The second cruiser fell from the skies without any semblance of grace, filling up the canyon it had been chasing Jun through. Noble Three looked up in awe at the corvette, what had possessed a Covenant ship to attack another two?

"Noble Two to Noble Three, you look like you could use some help."

Jun nodded in acceptance, if anyone or thing could defy death, hijack a Covenant ship, learn the controls, then shoot down two cruisers, it would be Kat, "And to think I was missing that smug attitude not twenty four hours ago."

A feminine chuckle filled the comms, "Mr. Bullock, bring the ship down a few hundred meters. Jun approach the port hangar bay, Jorge will let you in."

This time Jun actually looked shocked, "Did you say Jorge? Should have known you'd drag him from the Void with you."

"Other way around, Warrant Officer, see you in a few," Kat replied.

â€|

Jun stepped onto the corvette's bridge, Jorge directly behind him, "Kat, where'd you get this ship?"

Noble Two pointed to Jorge, "Ask him, but ask him later, something's happened, Dot?"

The AI's grid like avatar appeared above the main holograph on the bridge, "Fifteen minutes ago Noble One, Four, and Six's Pelican sustained damage. Transponder locations indicate Sierras 239 and 312 have exited the craft and are en route to the Pillar of Autumn on foot. Covenant Battle Net shows a Scarab class tank set to intercept in ten minutes."

"Mr. Bullock you think you can get this ship over to Azsod in ten minutes?"

"Do I like whiskey?"

Kat was about to respond when for the second time today the alarm klaxon's blared throughout the ship, "Dot that better not be another case of mistaken identity!"

"Negative, Noble Two," the emotionless voice replied, "The Covenant seem to have discerned our true allegiances. A CCS class battlecruiser is en route to intercept."

"Scratch that last order, Mr. Bullock," Kat said as she readjusted the holographic projector to show their incoming assailant, "Sergeant Rodriguez!"

Marcus quickly stood at attention, "Ma'am!"

"Do you know how to fly a pelican?"

The Sergeant cocked his head, "U-uh, yes ma'am!"

"Good, you will escort Noble Three and Noble Five to the rest of Noble Team," Kat ordered the trooper before keying her comm., "Lieutenant, get your team in flight gear and up to your Sabres, you will be escorting Pelican Bravo O Two Niner to the coordinates I'm sending you now."

"Yes, ma'am! You heard the Spartan! Get your ass in gear Echo!"

"Doctor! How are your patients?"

"Scared but all right, Commander," Doctor Sanders replied, "What's going on with the alarms?"

"It appears a Covenant battlecruiser has decided we're less than friendly."

Patrick spoke up, "Us? Not friendly? Ridiculous!"

Kat looked down at the fiery haired young man, "Well whatever the case they sure think we're interesting..."

"Now that I can believe!"

"â€| and I need all hands on deck. Get your patients up here Doc."

"Commander, I must protest, they are not in any condition to be running around an alien shipâ€|"

"Your protest has been noted, Doctor, now get them up here now!"

"Sabres and Pelican have been launched, twelve minutes until they have rendezvoused with the rest of Noble Team."

"Thank you Dot, time until the battlecruiser gets here?"

"Four minutes to intercept."

Starboard bridge entrance opened up, admitting three women. The Doctor quickly ushered the two civilians over to the only Spartan

left on the ship, "Well here they are, Spartan; just don't push them too hard."

"I'll do my best, Doctor," Kat promised before looking the two women over, "Your uniforms suggest you possess some technical expertise?"

The dark skinned one spoke up, "I-I amâ€| was, a sensor technician for Misriah Armory. I built sensor suites for just about any kind of ship the UNSC produced right here on Reach."

The blonde woman found her voice next, "I used to be an engineer aboard a class Y freighter, damn thing was always breaking down, and I've gotten pretty good at improvising."

"Class Y, eh?" Patrick spoke up from his seat at the helm, "I used to pilot a class Y, pretty old ship, you certainly would have to be a resourceful lass to keep that bucket of bolts flying."

Kat sighed at yet another interruption from the, admittedly skilled, but thoroughly annoying pilot, "We're going to need both of your skills. We've got an incoming Covenant battlecruiser, and not enough firepower to even scratch those shields."

"What do we have?"

"That's a good question, Msâ€|"

"Hannah Johnson," the dark skinned woman said, "I have an uncle in the Marine Corps."

"Well Ms. Johnson, let's get an answer to your question, Dot bring up a list of supplies aboard this ship."

"Gladly, Noble Two."

A nearby holographic screen flared to life, and a list of different components appeared. Both women moved over to the screen, hovering over it and considering the various uses for each item. It didn't take long before Hannah approached Kat.

"Um, ma'am?"

"What is it, Ms. Johnson?"

Hannah looked over to her blonde companion before turning back to the Spartan, "This ship is carrying forty tons of pressurized methane."

Kat blinked, "And?"

The blonde spoke up, "Well it's linked into the ventilation system, we can eject the gas out of the ship, create a cloud of methane that could obscure us."

"Methane might not be transparent but a cloud of gas isn't going to fool Covenant sensors," the Spartan reminded her.

The Misriah sensor tech put in her two cents, "But if we ignited the gas cloud, the heat signature would obscure ours, so much so that we

could escape!"

"â€| Good work, Ms. Johnson, Msâ€| I'm sorry I never asked for your name."

"Sarah Travers, ma'am."

"Well good work both of you, Dot can you get the methane ready for release?"

"Negative, manual release only," Dot's emotionless tone replied, "Warning, battlecruiser ninety seconds out."

"Damnit! Dot, show these women where to go, here take these," the Spartan held out a pair of small communicators, "and take two engineers. Buoyancy, No Helmet!"

The two floating aliens drifted over, and the two women shied away, "Don't worry their harmless. Tell them what you need to do, and they'll do it without fail. Go, GO!"

â€|

Carter swerved the Pelican, avoiding several plasma bolts, and fired the nose mounted chain gun, ripping apart a banshee with seventy millimeter rounds and putting another one up on his kill count. The Pelican's rear thrusters belched out more smoke, the right one was on fire, and the canopy was filled with holes. One of the holes led a straight line down into Noble One's chest, ending in a terrible scorch mark on the armor and third degree burns underneath.

The Pelican left a trail of smoke as it turned, slowing down as it did, letting the Phantom chasing it shoot by and bringing it straight into the Spartan's line of sight. The nose mounted chain gun belched again, shredding through the Phantom's tough armor and trashing the delicate plasma manifolds beneath. The dropship struggled to stay in the air before a second explosion blew it apart from the inside out, raining purple and pink debris all over the ground.

Peeking out the window, Carter surveyed a scarred battlefield below him. A Wraith down in the valley had been launching plasma mortars against his Spartans, had being the key word. Six rolled off of the purple tank, letting it boost by and crush a wayward grunt moments before the plasma grenade lodged inside the pilot's seat exploded, sending chunks of purple scrap metal flying.

Emile apparently had been assigned the arduous task of clearing out the brutes, a task only Noble Four would enjoy. Even from close in Emile's movements would be hard to follow, his reactions were unparalleled amongst Noble Team, and from Carter's height it was impossible, but whenever the massive simian's approached the battle happy warrior, the spray of purple blood could be seen from orbit.

The two Spartan's on the ground moved on, into the cave system ahead, so Noble One turned his attention to the horizon.

"Noble!" the Commander grunted out in pain as soon as he saw it, "You have â€| situation!"

Apparently they saw it too, "Muthaâ€¦ we can get past it sir!"

Carter shook his head, but this time felt no pain. Cumulative blood loss had finally caught up to him, "No you can't, not without help."

The Commander snatched his helmet from the floor as it rolled past him, sliding it over his own bloody face.

"Commander!" Emile continued to protest, "You don't have the firepower!"

"No," Carter said without pain, "But I have the mass."

The Pelican opened up with its guns, grabbing the Scarab's attention. The massive insect like tank powered down its main cannon, choosing instead to look up in annoyance at the wounded bird.

"Solid copy. Hit em hard boss."

Carter unbuckled the restraints, getting ready for one last ditch effort, but the chances of surviving were too slim. Someone would have to be looking for him to find him in time, "You're on your own Noble, Carter out."

Noble Team's leader turned away from the pilot's seat, the controls set for a suicide run at the Scarab, and used what was left of his strength to sprint out the back hatch. The Spartan leapt from the Pelican, holding himself spread eagle for a second, and curled into a ball, locking his armor.

Behind him, Carter heard the massive explosion brought on by a thirty ton ball of steel and titanium slamming into the Scarab. Chunks of metal flew past him, trailing streams of smoke. The Spartan plummeted straight down onto the rock face, slamming down onto the forty five degree slope and tumbling towards the sheer cliff.

Just as he was about to drop off the thousand foot cliff, the Spartan slammed into rock jutting upwards from the surface. Carter gasped in pain as his back jammed against the thick limestone slab. The Spartan stayed conscious just long enough to watch the wounded Scarab slide down the limestone slope, gouging great ruts through the stone. The massive head of the insectoid tank glared down at Carter, hanging on with its two front legs, gathering power in its main cannon, but the million ton body was too much, and gravity pulled it off the cliff, and sending it plummeting towards the plains below.

Carter's vision began to fade; grey was seeping into his vision, just as blood began seeping into the rest of his armor.

â€¦

Echo One hammered the triggers of her Sabre, sending high explosive thirty millimeter rounds hurtling towards a squadron of banshees. Each Covenant craft exploded after only one hit, the thin armor providing no armor for the massive rounds.

Kelly tilted her fighter to chase off a banshee, "Watch yourself Bravo O Two Niner, you don't have shields like we do!"

"Copy that Echo One!" Marcus' voice sounded in her headset, "You guys have eyes on the Autumn yet?"

Kelly quickly looked up from her radar screen and looked towards the western horizon. The sun was already beginning to dip, making it somewhat difficult to keep a direct line of sight, but she certainly was able to pick out the massive hull of the a Halcyon class cruiser, but only just.

"Affirmative O Two Niner," Lieutenant Anderson replied, "We're probably thirty kilometers out, plenty of tangeros between us and it. Echo Squad form up on me, O Two Niner take up the rear."

A chorus of affirmatives answered the Lieutenant, and she dove down to an altitude of three thousand meters. Echo Two, Travis Mayweather, and Echo Three, Walter Graves, formed up on her flanks, forming a wedge.

"Multiple contacts!" Rodriguez shouted over the comms, being the only pilot with an actual Radar Intercept Officer.

"I see them, fourteen Type 31 XMF's," Kelly radioed her wingmen, "Seraphs, too many to destroy in passing, we'll have to engage in a dogfight."

"A dogfight's gonna slow us down, we'll never reach the Autumn before she takes off!"

"Agreed, Echo Three, come with me, Mayweather! Keep on O Two Niner's tail and make sure nothing lays a single plasma bolt on that Pelican's hull, understood?"

Travis' Sabre broke formation, dropping to fifteen hundred meters, just behind the Pelican, "Copy Echo One, good luck ma'am!"

"To you as well, Echo Two," Kelly said.

The Lieutenant turned her head back to the incoming Seraphs, only seconds away from weapons range, "Weapons hot! FIRE!"

Bullets and plasma streamed past each other, slamming into shields and streaming past fighters. The Sabres broke under superior numbers, splitting wide and high to the right at extreme enough angles for the Seraphs to follow. The alien fighters had speed on their side, closing in on the Sabres, but certainly not maneuverability, and certainly not in atmosphere.

Flaps extended on the wings of the human fighters, letting the four chasing Seraphs shoot by, and putting them right in their crosshairs. Thirty millimeter cannons opened up, ricocheting off shields before the finally breaching the electromagnetic barriers and gutting the alien craft. The Seraph had thick armor plating almost everywhere, but the single pulse engine had none, and the four fighters turned to four bright blue and purple stars against the darkening skies above Azzod province.

"Ten left, Echo Three, I'm going to lead them on a wild goose chase, pick off anyone who gets to close to the goose."

"Affirmative Echo One," Graves serious voice exuded confidence, he was a veteran pilot in the Sabre program, having been shoved into the top secret program as soon as he was done with flight school, the YSS-1000 was almost an extension of his body.

Tilting her fighter's nose towards the surface, Kelly slammed down the throttle, shooting past more of the alien craft, gathering three on her tail as she passed the sound barrier. Plasma bolts flew past her ship, a couple striking her shields but skillful maneuvers kept the aliens from acquiring a lock.

One blip on her radar disappeared, two, Graves was hard at work. The last blip was swarmed by six smaller blips, and quickly disappeared from her radar, "That's seven, we're halfway through, Warrant Officer."

"Copy that Lieutenant, we've got five bogeys making a push on our front, looks like the other two are trying to cut off our escape vectors."

"What's your gun count read, Echo Three?"

Walter flipped was silent for a second, the fighters had gathered quite a bit of distance between them, before answering, "One Medusa missile pod and three hundred rounds in the main gun."

"I've got two shots left with the Medusa but only a hundred and fifty rounds, Graves I want you to engage the flankers, I'll use my missile pods to scatter the main force, then come in, finish off what you can with what ammo you have, and I'll finish the rest."

"Aye ma'am, breaking off in threeâ€¦ twoâ€¦ one!"

The Sabre following Kelly to the port split off, high and wide, to meet the first flanking Seraph head on. Echo One held steady, staring down the formation of enemy fighters, thumb hovering over the missile controls. Anderson had set the missiles to detonate manually, rather than on impact, on the belief that the nearby explosions would be enough to severely weaken the shields of several fighters, if not all five.

As soon as the targets were within one thousand meters, Kelly double tapped the trigger, sending twelve missiles barreling out of their pods and streaking along the invisible radar beam straight towards the enemy fighters. The Seraphs didn't even bother with evasive maneuvers, the squid-head pilots knew that the missiles couldn't get a positive lock on their ships with the shields up, leading to a very nasty surprise.

Another double tap on the control and all twelve missiles detonated simultaneously. The results exceeded Echo One's expectations as two Seraphs dove out of the sky and smashed into the ground below and another simply ceased to exist.

Kelly pulled the trigger on her main gun, lighting up the purple craft to her left. Her shots, though accurate, simply bounced off the shielding of the fighter, but they did shatter them just as Graves acquired a missile lock. The last six missiles of Echo Three blew apart the Seraph from the inside out, leaving nothing but debris.

"Looks like the last one is making a run for it, Lieutenant."

Kelly smirked, "Oh that son of a bitch ain't goin' far."

The two Sabres opened up simultaneously, shredding the alien fighter to pieces.

The pilots relaxed, their radar was clear of any other airborne craft, and checked their long range instruments, ie, their eyes. What they found was most disturbing.

"LT, is that cruiser?"

"'Fraid so, Graves, that thing is headed straight forâ€|," Kelly paused at a new development, "Oh my God!"

A white streak of light erupted from nearby the pillar of Autumn, bright enough that even from their position over fifteen kilometers away it was visible, and slammed into the charging particle cannon of the CCS class battlecruiser that had been poised to glass the Autumn. The energy built up in the cannon now found itself with nowhere to go except up, and up it went, taking the entire midsection of the ship with it.

Kelly stared wide eyed at the battlecruiser falling from the sky. She stared so intently she almost missed the Pillar of Autumn lifting off of the ground, but she definitely heard Captain Keyes over the comms.

"This is the Pillar of Autumn," the authoritative voice was on every frequency, "we're away, and we have the Package."

â€|

"Now Corporal!" Kat yelled through the corvette's internal comm. system.

Jessica Rayne was standing in front of the middle starboard plasma turret, acquiring a lock on a most inconspicuous target, a cloud of green methane. As soon as she heard the order, the Corporal pressed the big red holographic button, firing a blob of plasma straight out from the ship that was soon caught in a controlled magnetic field and shot off towards the cloud of very flammable gas.

A CCS class battlecruiser was descending upon the corvette, having monitored its attack of the two CRS class cruisers and their subsequent destruction at its hands. The cruiser hadn't even bothered arming its weapons, feeling rather confident that the battle was already won, and considering all statistics, they had.

A typical SDV heavy corvette had no shields, no specific ship to ship weapons, and no slipspace drive. All it did have was the same compliment of battle plating as any other ship its size, a few siege torpedo launchers that certainly posed no threat to any properly shielded vessels, and one standard energy projector, but the corvette was below the cruiser, making the only viable offensive weapon they had equipped, useless, or so the cruiser thought.

As soon as the cloud of methane ignited the cruiser lost track of the

corvette, the thermal signature lost amongst the rapidly expanding cloud of fire below. If only one had bothered to look out the window, the might have noticed a nine hundred meter vessel rapidly ascending off the cruiser's port side, but as it was, a CCS class battlecruiser's bridge had no windows, nor did the ship itself.

"That's it Mr. Bullock, put us right over top of them!" Kat ordered the young civilian pilot.

The only female member of Noble Team hovered over a console, the main weapons battery, and was calculating a firing solution on the cruiser below.

"Now remember people, one shot won't kill it, I need both Burgess and Rayne to keep finding solutions on that cruiser, find the softest spot and hit it hard as soon as those shields pop!"

Two affirmatives over the ships comm. array let Kat know the two troopers would do their best, just as was expected of them. Noble Two slammed her robotic right hand down on blue button that immediately turned red. Outside, a buzzing could be heard, a buzzing that soon turned into the low pitched whine of a particle beam gathering strength. That low pitched whine turned to a howling blast as the energy was released.

To Kat, the one tenth of a second it took for the concentrated stream of ionized plasma to strike the shields of the cruiser seemed to drag on for hours as the main holographic projector showed the progress of the beam. Finally the plasma struck the shields, boring into the powerful electromagnetic field relentlessly until it finally just popped, allowing the particle beam to slam into the battlecruiser's armor and melt a few meters of the thick material away.

As soon as the shields went down, both Jessica and David went to work, running back and forth between terminals, inputting coordinates and initiating the firing sequences. The small siege class plasma torpedoes weren't meant to burrow through thick starship grade armor, instead meant to cripple high value structures, and if used in salvos, completely obliterate enemy defenses. But all factors considered, the smaller plasma torpedoes were certainly effective.

The first targets had been the cruiser's weapons systems, destroying plasma turrets and pulse laser point defense systems, then they began burning their way through the thinner sections of the ships armor, intent on destroying the pulse engines so it couldn't get away.

The plasma coils at the bottom of the corvette gathered strength once again, glowing brighter and brighter until it lanced out in a devastating purple and blue blaze, completely coring the unfortunate cruiser.

Kat stood back in relief, "Dot, any other Covenant take notice?"

"Negative, Noble Two, the only other surviving Covenant ship in the area is headed towards the ship breaking yards in Azsod."

"Azsod!? Why is it headed there?"

"Most likely to prevent the Pillar of Autumn leaving the planet."

Kat turned to Patrick, "Mr. Bullock get us over there, Now!"

"Sure thing, ma'am," the Scott replied with ease as he pulled at the control sticks, "But I should warn you, gonna be forty minutes before we get there."

"Will that be enough time Dot?"

"Negative..."

Kat's shoulders slumped, feeling the weight of defeat pressing down on her. With all of the radiation from downed ships long range communications were down, so she couldn't even warn the rest of Noble Team to get out of there, they were likely all dead as soon as that cruiser began glassing the shipyards.

"â€| the cruiser has already been destroyed."

Patrick and Kat looked at each other, "What!?"

â€|

"Cruiser, inbound for the Autumn," Captain Jacob Keyes barked suddenly. Noble Six turned around, taking notice of the looming purple behemoth.

"Noble Four, I need fire on that cruiser or we're not getting out of here!"

Emile's tired voice came through the comms, he knew what that meant, there was no getting off the planet for him, "I have your window, sir."

Six looked up at the Mass Driver, watching it turn towards the cruiser, before stepping towards the Pelican full of marines. Two steps was all the further he made before noticing something to his left.

The second Pelican never stood a chance as a Phantom fired its heavy plasma cannon straight into the rear thruster gimbal, sending the dropship spiraling to the canyon floor. Six fired at the Phantom with his MA37, but the bullets just bounced off the superior metal of the Covenant craft as it made its way to the Mass Driver.

The troop bay doors opened up on the Phantom, revealing a menagerie of Covenant soldiers, all of the highest order. Two Zealots leapt from the craft, one landing on top of the Mass Driver's control booth with an activated sword. The massive alien reared its sword hand, preparing to strike, but it wasn't fast enough.

BOOM!

The glass shattered upwards, following the eight gauge buckshot straight into the alien's face, breaking the shields and cutting through the reptilian's scale-like skin. Emile pulled himself up through the shattered canopy, put his M45's barrel in the elite's

mouth, and pulled the trigger.

Metallic blue blood sprayed the skull clad Spartan as the powerful BB's ripped through the alien's brain matter. Further stepping out of the control booth, Emile cocked his shotgun again, "WHO'S NEXT!?"

"Emile get down!"

Six was too late, the second Zealot's sword ripped through the MJOLNIR armor, punching through the right side of the Spartans chest. Emile's right lung burned away from the violent plasma.

An elbow smashed into the Zealot's face, forcing the alien to release its death grip on the Spartan and allowing the super soldier to slip off of the sword, spin around, and rip the knife from his shoulder pauldron.

"I'm ready!" the Spartan screamed in defiance, "HOW BOUT YOU!"

Seven times, Emile stabbed the Zealot seven times before finally stopping. Blue blood coated his armor and seeped into his open wound. With only one lung, Emile was rapidly losing his ability to breathe, and with half of his heart having burned away, his pulse was dropping rapidly. For the first time in the Spartan III's life, Noble Four wanted to give up, to lie down and die, but the sound of an MA37 brought him somewhat out of his haze.

He used what little strength he had to pull himself up onto the railing. Noble Six was engaging two Zealots down on the lower level of the warehouse. The first Zealot was a little small for his species, standing around seven and a half feet and seemed a little scrawny for a Covenant warrior, but with the fluidity and grace with which it dodged assault rifle fire, it was clear as to why the alien had reached the upper echelon of the Covenant military.

The second was bigger, around eight feet tall, and was heavily muscled. It may not have moved as fast as its comrade but it definitely would be no joke to take on this monster in hand to hand combat. Of course if Emile wasn't mortally wounded it would be a simple matter for the fastest member of Noble Team to simply dodge any attack and reply with razor sharp knives.

Six ducked in and out of cover, wearing down the shields of the smaller Zealot with quick bursts, until the alien's shields finally broke. Six ripped the empty clip from his MA37 and slapped a new one in. He rounded the corner on the smaller Zealot, aiming not at the monster's body, but at its knees, crippling its ability to leap away from the deadly force. As soon as the first three bullets tore through the alien's knee cap, Six turned the rifle on the rest of the alien, unloading the entire clip into the alien. 7.62 Armor Piercing NATO rounds tore through the Covenant warrior's body armor, ripping and tearing flesh on their way through, but elites are tough, and it took the entire clip to finally drop the alien to the floor.

A stream of high velocity plasma rounds erupted from underneath Emile's position as the second Zealot let loose with two plasma rifles. The muscular warrior laughed with a sense of superiority as it forced Noble Six back into cover, letting loose a hail of plasma on everything in sight. With Six pinned, Emile had to do

something.

Grunting in pain, Emile brought his right hand across his body, slipping two grenades from the only surviving bandolier. He slipped one into his left hand and held them over the railing, ten meters above the laughing Zealot's head.

"Laugh it up, bitch," Emile panted with ragged breath, pulling the pins from each grenade and dropping them.

The Zealot was still firing his twin plasma rifles in sustained bursts when he heard two metallic pings. Looking down in alarm, the elite only had time to groan in annoyance before both grenades went off, completely annihilating the alien.

Emile collapsed, dropping off of the railing in a pool of blood. Not his blood, of course, any bleeding he might have had was stopped by the heat of the plasma sword that had slashed his lung, of course he was still missing quite a bit of blood, considering that nearly a full liter and a half had been boiled away.

More gunfire from down below kept Noble Four conscious, Noble Six still needed his help. Emile crawled along his stomach, his left hand pulling himself along the blood stained steel, his right hand gripped loosely around the Spiker he had stolen earlier. He finally reached the edge, looking down over the second level where Six had already disposed of one Zealot, and had a second one on the ropes.

The Type 50 Directed Energy Rifle in the standing Zealot's hands kept jumping, spewing condensed balls of plasma that rapidly expanded in an explosion whenever they hit their target. Of course Six never let the Concussion Rifle strike him, or even get close.

Six closed the distance quickly, sidestepping an incoming four fingered fist and using the butt of his rifle to crack the elite's shields. The Zealot responded by sweeping his Concussion rifle at the Spartan's head, a strike that Six easily ducked and delivered a left handed jab straight into the alien's abdominals, finally penetrating the shields.

Noble Six rolled backwards, avoiding a powerful stomp by a two pronged hoof, and came to his knees, rifle up and blazing. The NATO rounds tore through the alien, much as it had the other on the lower level, punching gaping holes through the scaly flesh and showering the concrete behind it with shiny blue blood.

Six swiveled on his knees, trying to get a bead on the last enemy left on the firing platform, but was too late. The gargantuan nine and a half foot tall saurian backhanded the Spartan to the ground, cracking the golden visor and snapping off a piece of the ceramic visor. Six was about to rise off of his stomach when a crushing stomp pounded him back into the concrete.

Above him, Sierra 312 could hear the Field Marshal laughing as it reached down, grabbing him by the back of the neck with its massive four fingered hand. The massive creature flung Six across the cement room, sending the Spartan crashing into massive crates containing various weapons, one of which slid out of its case.

Noble Six snatched the M90 CAWS from the ground, slipping three loose

rounds into the chamber. He pumped a round into the firing position and fired, barely scratching the elite's shields. Another shot sent spider webs all over the energy shields, showing the stressed case of plasma. A third and final shot was put on hold, however, as the Field Marshal rushed forward, kicking the shotgun away from the Spartan and planting its massive hoof on his chest.

The elite snarled as it activated its energy sword, still standing with its hoof on the Spartan's chest. Its right arm reared back, sword glowing brightly in Azsod's twilight and shields fading back to invisibility as they regrouped power. It was about to lunge when a most unusual event occurredâ€|

SLINKT!

SLINKT!

SLINKT!

SLINKT!

The shields suddenly snapped out of existence, followed up by a shower of blue blood and guts washing over Noble Six's armor. The Spartan wiped the blue blood away from his cracked golden visor, looking up into the open chest cavity of the Field Marshal. Above him, three glowing hot spikes protruded from a warped piece of steel.

The fifteen hundred pound Covenant warrior slumped to the ground, revealing to Six a wounded Spartan twenty meters away with a massive gash along the right side of his chest.

"Four!"

Noble Six rushed to Emile's side, stooping over the wounded Spartan who still clenched a Spiker as if it were his only life line, "Hang on Emile!"

Reaching into the leather pack on his lower back, Six produced two bottles of biofoam. The injectors in Emile's suit had been irreparably damaged by the sword, having never activated. The first canister was administered to the edges of the wound, the molecular miracle providing oxygen directly to the blood there and jumpstarting the regeneration process. The second canister filled the hole, providing more nutrients to the regenerating cells.

The process would only be temporary, and it certainly wouldn't permanently heal injuries this severe, but it would keep Emile alive for several more hours.

"Hang on Four," Six patted the skull carving, "I just need to destroy a massive battlecruiser."

Noble Six could have sworn he heard a weak chuckle coming from behind the skull and smiled in return before leaping up the ladder to the Mass Driver's control booth.

"Mass driver won't crack those shields," Keyes voice filled the olive helmet, "Steady Spartan!"

The Mass Driver smashed through the armor of an approaching Phantom, violently coring the dropship. The massive turret turned, finding another craft, and another, and another. Phantom after Banshee fell from the sky in pieces as the looming purple battlecruiser slowly approached the Autumn.

A final Phantom dropped from the sky, and the bottom of the cruiser lit up, energy building up, "Now Lieutenant, hit her in the gut!"

SHLANGâ€|BOOM!

As soon as the massive slug struck the plasma conduit the built up energy expanded in every direction. Fires upwards of three thousand degrees vaporized nearby armor plating and destabilized more plasma conduits. Secondary explosions rocked the ship, shaking the entire cruiser and knocking it out of the sky.

As the cruiser sank into the bay, Keyes' voice came over the comm. for one last time, "This is the Pillar of Autumn, we're away, and we have the package."

â€|

"How's your Commander?" Marcus asked as they pulled the Pelican away from the cliff face.

"Carter will be fine," Jun assured the Sergeant, "He'll need a few replacement parts, but the biofoam will keep him alive until we get him back to the Doctor."

"That's good," Rodriguez admitted, finding it much easier to talk to the marksman than any of the other two Spartans he'd been around, "Can't really afford to lose any more of Spartans."

Jun nodded, "Humanity can hardly afford to lose anyone at all. Where are the last two transponders coming from?"

"Near the Mass Driver that knocked that cruiser out of the sky. Did you guys hear Keyes back there?"

"Sure did."

"What the hell is the Package?"

For the first time since Marcus met Noble Three, Jun clammed up, "Not a clue."

Marcus snorted a laugh, "Wow, that's convincing!"

Jun let a small chuckle escape his tan lips, "Just get us to the other Spartans, Sergeant."

Rodriguez let out an 'aye, sir' and turned back to the controls, rocketing towards the dock that the Autumn had vacated when the two transponders he had been chasing did something odd.

"Hey, Spartans! They're on the move!"

This time it wasn't Jun who answered, but Jorge, "What do you mean, Trooper?"

"The transponders! They're moving, and fast, too fast, even for you guys."

Jorge seemed to think something over, "Echo Two, get up high, see if you can find anything capable of carrying two Spartans."

"Copy that, Sierra!" Mayweather answered.

The Sabre peeled off of formation, rocketing upwards in an attempt to find any indication as to where the Spartans were, it didn't take long.

"Got a Falcon, moving at four hundred knots, headed east, looks like they're trying to get to CASTLE!"

"Can we get a signal to them?" Jun asked.

"Negative Noble Three, radiation still interfering with long range communications, we'll have to get within one kilometer to transmit a message," Mayweather answered.

"One point seven kilometers, Echo Two!" a new voice added.

"Lieutenant Anderson," Jorge rumbled, "Nice of you to join us, mind going to pick up Six? We've got to get the Commander to the Doc as soon as possible."

"Sure thing, Sierra, see you there!" the two new additions to the small fleet of aerial ships left as soon as they had arrived, engaging their after burners and blasting off at supersonic speeds.

"Marcus, get us back to the last known coordinates of the corvette, as fast as you can," Jorge ordered.

"Yes, sir."

â€

Elizabeth Sanders stepped out of the makeshift medbay, blowing an exhausted breath as she did so and handing two blood soaked plastic gloves to her assistant, Heavier Than Nitrogen. The medbay behind her had been set up with equipment salvaged from the Halcyon cruisers. Organ cloners, surgical equipment, sterile field generators, anything needed to save two Spartans' lives she had set up in what must have been the second officer's quarters. Elite sized furniture had been vacated from the room to make way for the equipment, and the engineers had been instrumental them. It may have taken quite a bit of convincing on her part, but Beth was quite confident that Lieutenant Commander Kat was happy she had loaned her access to the alien's engineering skills four days ago.

"They'll live," Doctor Sanders told the anxious crowd, "Sierra 239's injuries were far more severe, but both had to have their lungs and hearts replaced. I have the tissue regenerator working on the muscle tissue. All in all, I'd say Sierra 259 will be ready for active duty

tomorrow, Sierra 239 in four days."

The four Spartan's standing in front of her sighed in relief. Three of them had their helmets off, but for some reason the Lieutenant refused to take his damaged helmet off. The only other woman present seemed particularly relieved at the news. To the Doctor, it seemed as though this entire squad of augmented super soldiers was a family, and Kat was certainly the youngest, though she held the second highest rank.

Kat smiled faintly at the news and began issuing orders, "I don't want to draw any attention until both Noble One and Fourâ€¦"

"Excuse me," Beth spoke up, waving her hands and grabbing the Spartan's attention, "I refuse to continue to acknowledge my patients as nothing more than a number, what are their names? And for that matter, what are yours? This crew has been busting their tails for you six and I think we deserve some thanks."

Kat seemed taken aback by the Doctor's sudden outburst before looking to her other Spartans. Jun of course had no problem, he was probably going to slip up anyway in one of his numerous soon to come conversations. Jorge was another Spartan who wouldn't have any problem with revealing his name, regardless of how intimidating his size was he was always the one to interact with civilians, and they almost always responded positively. Six was the one Kat couldn't be sure about, in fact, Kat couldn't even be sure what his name was, considering it was covered in black ink, and that fact was something the Lieutenant seemed reluctant to change.

"My name is Catherine, but I go by Kat," Noble Two started, "Noble One's name is Carter, your other patient is Emile."

"I'm Jun."

"Chief Warrant Officer Jorge, ma'am."

The Doctor turned to the final Spartan, the one who had been standing silently throughout the process, "Well?"

"I don't know."

"What does that mean?" Beth stood back in shock.

"It means I don't remember, nor do I want to, Noble Six or Sierra 312 will both suffice."

"How can you not remember? You can't be older than twenty five, that means you enlisted only seven years ago. You can't tell me that in seven years you managed to forget the name you wrote down on the enlistment form!"

Silence answered her, and as tired as she was it still didn't take long for her to reach a new, horrifying conclusion, "No, you can't be!" she turned to the others, "Did you know about what happened to him?"

The other Spartan's refused to make eye contact with her, "Ohâ€¦ all of you? This is an outrage! When the people hear about thisâ€¦"

"No, Doctor," Kat said vehemently, "The last thing the UNSC needs now is a scandal. Remember, if anyone asks, you don't know anything. You treated our wounds, slapped a band-aid over our scrapes and sent us on our way, understand? Because if you let anyone on to what you know, you won't wake up the next morning, ONI will make sure of that."

Doctor Sanders seemed upset with the order, but conceded, "Very well. I won't say a word."

"Good, that goes for you too Patrick!" Kat finished by raising her voice.

"Ahâ€¦ Ahâ€¦ Buoyancy! How could you! Eavesdropping on the Lieutenant Commander!? Oh she'll have you hanged! Or sank? However it works with you guys," a Scottish accent sounded from a nearby speaker.

Kat rolled her eyes, "Did anyone else hear that?"

"Umâ€¦ no, and I wasn't eavesdropping, honest!" Bullock tried to assure her, "I was calling to let you know that we've entered another debris field as ordered but I heard you talking andâ€¦ wellâ€¦ you know."

Kat and the other Spartan's shared a look, "It's all right, Mr. Bullock, just remember what we said."

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Good," Noble Two turned to her Spartans, "Settle in, we won't be going anywhere until Carter is up, even then, we probably won't leave orbit until Emile has recovered. Lieutenant, get an engineer to look at your armor, they're already looking at Emile and Carter's."

Six looked like he was going to protest, but Kat cut him off, "That's an order Lieutenant. Jorge I want you to arrange a few scouting parties, scavenge some of the ships for weapons, food, vehicles, the same things as last time, Jun I want an inventory on everything we already have, take the civilians with you."

"Yes ma'am," Jorge replied first, stepping past and slipping his helmet on and walking off in search of the troopers.

"Sure thing Kat," Jun said, then hesitated, "What are the civvies names?"

"Hannah Johnson and Sarah Travers, you'll probably find them in their quarters just around the corner, third and fourth on the left respectively."

Jun nodded, keeping his helmet under his arm as he walked past his superior officer and around the corner. Kat watched him turn the corner and then turned to Noble Six, "Lieutenant, what are you still doing here?"

"Are you sure about letting theseâ€¦ engineers, work on our armor?"

"They're just patching them up, Six," Kat assured him, "and if you're worried about them messing up your armor, don't. They fixed a ruined

slipspace drive even though they'd never seen one made by humans before, trust me, they'll fix that crack in your visor. Then I want you back here, looks like those Zealots gave you a pounding."

Six struggled with the decision for a moment, but conceded, "Yes, ma'am."

Kat watched him go before turning down the hall, making her way to the bridge. The first set of doors let her out on the starboard side of the hangar bay. The civilian transport that had once taken up most of the hangar bay was down to a skeletal frame. Spare hydrogen fuel cells had been salvaged, hull plating was used to reinforce the Pelican's armor, and spare parts were being stored in the former bunks of the corvette's grunt compliment.

No Helmet and Lighter Than Most were still working on stripping the transport, pulling the frame apart and dropping the raw materials into grav lifts operated by Warrant Officers Travis Mayweather and Walter Graves. Kat stepped through the ship's skeleton, minding her head as she stepped underneath an i-beam carried by No Helmet. The Pelican at the far end of the hangar was already gone, meaning Jorge was already carrying out her orders. The Sparrowhawk and Falcon that had been brought in by Noble Three and Six were still sitting there, both in near perfect condition.

Kat continued through the hangar bay, continuing on to the bridge. When she got there she immediately took up her standard position, standing next to a console within full view of the main holographic projector.

"Update on Noble Five?"

Dot, now running at peak efficiency, having all six pieces of herself back together, answered, "Noble Five has taken the UNSC Army Troopers with him and they are currently boarding the UNSC Trafalgar"

"The supercarrier?"

"The very same, Noble Two."

"Patch me through to him," Kat ordered the AI.

The comm. system crackled with static, the debris field they hid in blocked any ship from detecting them from outside, but it also messed with the long range communication system of the corvette.

"Ma'am?"

"Jorge, what have you found so far?"

"Nothing much, ma'am, just boarded herâ€|" Jorge was silent on the other end for a few moments before continuing, "I wonder if the Trafalgar took anyone down with her."

"She had two MAC guns and thousands of fighters, I'm sure it took an entire squadron of cruisers to put her down for the count, Jorge."

"I hope soâ€|" No survivors so far, and I don't expect to find any,

most of this ship is a vacuum."

Kat nodded, listening in on his reports while surfing both the corvette's inventory and what Dot had logged in the Trafalgar's inventory. The UNSC supercarrier had thousand's of fighters, but it also had massive cargo bays, carrying hundreds of vehicles of varying makes and models and new and experimental weapons, one of which caught her eye.

"Noble Two to Noble Five, Trafalgar's inventory is showing a new weapon system located in a cargo bay one hundred meters ahead of you."

"What kind of weapon system?"

"It's called the M739 Light Machine Gun, manifest logs it under the name SAW. Check it out, if it meets up with your expectations grab it, and any ammunition you can find."

"Anything else interesting in there? Rayne, watch the door, Burgess you take point."

"Showing a crate of M6 Grindell/Galilean Nonlinear Rifles and plenty of the standard weaponry, MA37's, M392's, ooh, a couple of BR55's. Grab what you can, load them on the Pelican and have someone bring them back, I'm opening up the port side cargo bay doors."

â€|

Three days later and Commander Carter stood on the bridge of the corvette, standing next to his second in command, "What's the status of the ship, Noble Two?"

"We've taken aboard fourteen metric tons of arms and ammunition, including some new weapons systems," Kat rattled off, "And Jorge is just strapping down the last piece of salvage, an M808 Main Battle Tank."

"I know that already Kat, what's the status of the ship? How are the weapon systems? What's the status of the propulsion? Fuel, hull, slipspace drive," Carter elaborated.

Noble Two nodded, switching the holographic screen to display ship status, "Weapons are at full, engines nominal, engineers have repaired the last hull breach and we now have atmosphere in every part of the shipâ€| Oh now this is interesting, we're low on fuel."

"That's not interesting, it's alarming Kat," Noble One turned on his second, "Options?"

"Oi! I got one, sir!"

Carter put an armored hand to his bare face, "Yes, Mr. Bullock?"

"Why don't we just refuel at that big ship?"

Kat looked up, "What big ship?"

"Have you guys not been paying attention?" Patrick asked as he got out of his seat and approached the main holograph, expanding it to show a view of a nearby Covenant fleet headed by a massive CAS class assault carrier. Ships may not be able to detect the corvette in the debris field, but the field had no effect on the corvette's long range sensors.

"Every hour, like clockwork, the little ships fly up to this big daddy and dock just underneath the front portion," the Scott explained, "Now the way I see it, why don't we just fly up and ask to be refueled?"

"They're going to need access codes, docking clearance, who's going to ask for those, you?"

"Well your AI managed to translate all of these consoles, right? I'm sure there are some audio logs from when this thing used to get refueled, just update the names!"

Kat pointed out a flaw in the plan, "The Covenant probably have this ship flagged as KIA, they're going to wonder what brings us back from the dead."

This time it was Carter who backed up the plan, "You're right, they would have this ship's transponder flagged as KIA, but those engineers disabled the transponder, and I might have an excuse as to why a silent corvette might be in the system."

The door opened up behind them, admitting a fully armored Noble Six and Noble Four. The former's visor had been repaired, thanks to the engineers, and the latter, though still sore from admittedly major surgery, was just now back into his fully repaired MJOLNIR.

Emile looked between the three people standing around the holographic projector, "What's happenin?"

"Get your gear ready, Four, and get everyone to the bridge," the Commander ordered, "We need some gas."

â€|

"Oh that daddy is way bigger up close!" Patrick whispered as he slipped the corvette in past a couple of CCS battlecruisers.

It was true, what Patrick had said, five kilometers sounds big on paper, but in real life, actually hanging in the monster's shadow, was another. This close the assault carrier took up all lines of sight, spanning from one end of the bridges one way mirrors to the other, and they weren't even inside the ship's shield layer yet.

Behind the pilot, two voices could be heard arguing.

"Why aren't you transmitting a transponder code? Perhaps you've forgotten to turn it on?" a translated guttural voice emitted from the command station.

Carter looked to the other people on the bridge, helmet under his arm, "Do you really think I would turn my ship's transponder codes on and let every ship in this system know we're carrying the Prophet of

Guile aboard?"

Jun was standing across from the Commander, also wearing his helmet under his arm, and silently mouthed the question, '_Prophet of Guile?_'

"Prophet of Guile? Never heard of any Prophet of Guile!"

"Nor have you or ever will! We are a part of covert operations, collecting new human weapons from each battlefield and studying them," Carter lied through his teeth, "Now you will forget you ever heard of us, assume we're another ship, and replace our empty fuel cells."

"â€| Yes, of course, we never meant to insult the Noble Hierarch, please proceed to the marker," the guttural voice on the other end almost sounded cowed.

Carter cut the transmission, "Dot, take over on the helm, put us exactly where they want us. Mr. Bullock get with the rest of the civilians and hunker down, don't open that door for anyone."

"Aye, aye Captain!" the Scott replied as he slid out of the chair.

Before he could reach the port side door, the Commander called out once more, "And Mr. Bullock!" Patrick turned to look at him, "Grab a shotgun from the port side cargo bay! Anyone makes it in, you're the last line of defense."

The pilot blanched slightly, "Aye, Captain." Patrick walked through the door and disappeared from sight, leaving just the six Spartans, three troopers, and three pilots.

"Forty three seconds to endpoint."

"Thank you Dot," Carter told the AI, then turned to the group in front of him, "Remember the plan. Six, you and Emile will take the grav lift from the comms array up into the carrier, according to this ship's database your objective will only be three hundred meters from your entry point. Get to the primary plasma conduit and place the charges, set the timer to ten minutes, five to get back, five for us to get out of here."

Noble Six and Noble Four nodded, each checking their weapons before sprinting for to their position. Noble One turned to the rest of his team, "Kat, take Jun and the pilots to the comms array, I'm guessing that grav lift isn't a one way trip. Jorge and the troopers are with me in the cargo bay. Yes Jorge?"

"Sir, what about the engineers?"

"The engineers will be the only reason the assault carrier won't be annihilating us in the meantime. No Helmet and Buoyancy are on the port side plasma turrets, Heavy and Lighter on the starboard. Dot will be keeping the fighters off our back with the corvette's point defense guns."

"Ten seconds to endpoint."

"You heard Dot, Move It!"

â€|

"You ready for this, Six?"

The olive Spartan turned towards the skulled Spartan, "Am I ready? I'm not the one who had major surgery three days ago."

"Ptchh! Please, I'm fine, new heart and lung feels great, almost as good as the old ones!"

"How bout your ribcage?"

"Sword couldn't cut the bone, and the plasma wasn't applied long enough to burn them away, so actually that part of me is still original, sort of."

Noble Six nodded, having experienced the wonders of owning unbreakable bones himself, and waited. The ship beneath them shuddered slightly as a docking clamp attached itself to the ship. From the Spartan's position, laying flat upside down against the dorsal arch of the corvette, they could see a massive pink tube descend upon the ships dorsal landing pad. Almost as soon as the tube made a seal on the ship, hissing could be heard all around as an atmosphere was pumped into the conduit and vertical streams of light began rising all around them.

Six and Four made eye contact through their visors, each counting down from three in perfect sync. When they both reached zero, the rolled out from under the arch and launched upwards, into the belly of the beast. The grav lift snatched the two thousand pound plus Spartans and pulled them one hundred meters in a manner of seconds, only slowing as they reached the end.

The room they found at the end of the lift was massive, at least fifty meters in diameter, and filled with elites, fifteen of them. The three minors standing near the edge stood back in shock as two Spartans emerged from the lift, and were punished for their inaction.

Emile, possessing reaction times surpassing most Spartan II's, was the first to act, slashing one minor's throat with his kukri and spinning the curved blade into the other's head, punching through the armor and gouging through brain matter.

Six was the next to act, providing a massive uppercut with his brand new assault weapon, an M739 LMG, and followed it off with a very, very loud burst of gunfire. The NATO rounds shredded the alien's supple flesh, and splattered blue blood over the unaware major's standing with their backs to the lift.

Two major's turned at the sound of the gunfire and the feeling of blood whetting their armor. Emile grabbed his new shotgun from his back, a brand new M45E, same look as his old M45, in fact there was only one major difference, this shotgun held twelve rounds, not six.

BOOM!

At twelve feet, the major never stood a chance, shields shattering and armor splintering under the force of the powerful buckshot. The major next to Emile's target reeled back from its comrade's demise, but not far enough as another powerful shot tore through it, dropping the alien to the floor.

Six lined up his new SAW with a stunned Ultra and fired. The light machine gun sounded off like a cavitating pump, each round almost indistinguishable from the others, and was absolutely devastating. Even after the Ultra fell from multiple wounds, Six didn't stop firing, taking advantage of the huge magazine and shifting from target to target, ripping apart elites trying to close in while Emile ravaged targets nearby.

It only took one minute and twelve seconds for all fifteen elites to drop to the ground. The room was a horror story, blood dripping from the ceiling and walls, pooling on the floor and dripping back down the grav lift towards the corvette.

A door on the far side of the circular room burst open, admitting a quartet of Ultras, the leader of which immediately roared and ignited an energy sword. Emile started to answer the elite's challenge when a strong hand gripped his shoulder, "He's not our concern, Four, let Kat have some fun with him."

Emile let a sadistic chuckle escape his mouth when he turned with Noble Six and pushed on towards the objective, "Oh man, I almost pity him now!"

â€|

Jorge watched from his hidden position as twenty four blue cylinders were set down in the hangar bay, "Oh, so that's what those were."

Commander Carter must have heard his remark, "You've seen them before, Five?"

"Affirmative, Commander," Jorge confirmed, "They were scattered all over the place when we arrived, until Six and I used them as explosive ordinance."

"Try not to this time; we need those to get out of here," Carter ordered, "Troopers, you ready?"

"Affirmative, Commander, I've got a perfect line of sight on both bay doors, Corporal Rayne is covering the starboard side, and Burgess has the port."

"Good work, Sergeant, now we just have to wait forâ€|"

Red lights flashed on the surface of assault carrier outside, the faint sound of alarms reverberated throughout the corvette, and plasma turrets began spooling up along the massive hull.

"Looks like the party's just getting started," Carter said at the interruption, "Dot, now!"

Outside the hangar bay six large plasma attenuators built up energy at the direction of the normally peaceful engineers, and launched out

into space, crippling the short range defensive weapons of the assault carrier. Smaller plasma turrets all around the ship lashed out at a squadron of banshees, shooting a two out of the air in the initial volley.

Marcus suddenly called out from his lookout position, "We've got Rangers! Jumpin in hot!"

"Light em up, Noble!" Carter barked.

As soon as the first of the white armored aliens landed Burgess rose from cover and took the head off of one of the elites. Marcus used his SRS99 Anti Materiel to strike another Ranger, center mass.

Across the hangar, more white armored aliens landed in the bay, jetpacks still hot from their brief flight. At first their view was obscured by the back end of a Pelican, and they approached cautiously, hoping to go unnoticed by any of the soldiers in the bay and use the dropship as cover. Their hopes were dashed, however, when the bay door of the Pelican swung open and gunfire ripped the lead alien apart.

Plasma repeater fire forced the Corporal back into the Pelican's troop bay, where she slapped a fresh magazine into her MA37. Jessica peaked back out of the bay door, finding an elite that was taking cover from Jorge's massive machine gun. At twenty feet, even on full auto the Corporal never missed a single bullet, all twelve rounds hitting their target and shredding the alien to pieces.

Carter focused on the field of fire provided by his Chief Warrant Officer, finding any alien's with their shields down and putting a NATO round through their skull with lethal efficiency, his M392 barking once every second. Jun may be the marksman on Noble Team, but Noble One would be more than adequate as a replacement. His shots almost always seemed to find their target, and each shot was expertly timed. As soon as one elite would lose its shields, a bullet would tear through its skull, a jackal shifts its shields to move to a different spot, it would suddenly find that it no longer possessed a head. In fact the only reason Carter wasn't taking the high position instead of Sergeant Rodriguez was because of the simple fact that he could survive the pure volume of high velocity plasma rounds his partner drew and he couldn't. The other two troopers, while much closer to the action, were both well behind cover, in perfect ambush spots.

Jorge turned the massive M247H from the starboard door to the port, laying down a field of suppressive fire on the Rangers entering the hangar. The 12.7 millimeter rounds were devastating to anything they struck, ripping through shields and armor alike, only the natural toughness of the elites managed to keep them alive after only a few shots, but their toughness was of little help when they were always being monitored by at least one accomplished marksmen, or markswoman in Jessica's case, let alone three.

Suddenly a voice cut through the din of combat, "I've got four elites closing in on my position! I could use some cover right about now!"

Marcus looked over to where Burgess was set up; sure enough four

Rangers were advancing on his location with caution. Their caution was warranted, had Burgess been holding anything other than a devastating M90, an elite could easily cross the gap before its shields broke and struck him down, but as it was, a head on assault would result in at least two dead Rangers.

"I've got your back, Corporal!" sitting on the upper level of the hangar bay, Sergeant Rodriguez was kneeling on a platform directly above the two Spartans, and across the room from David, giving him a perfect line of sight on the four elites.

CRACK!

The 14.5 millimeter round easily punched through the alien's shielding and bore right through the elite's center mass, spraying blood out the Ranger's right side.

CRACK!

Another high velocity armor piercing bullet brought yet another Ranger to the floor without so much as a twitch of pain.

CRACK!

The round was just off, only gouging a deep slash across the alien's chest, but breaking the shields, allowing four ounces of buckshot to rip through its armor and dropping it to the floor.

Marcus moved to find the next target but curiously, it seemed to be missing, "Corporal Burgess, you have eyes on last tango?"

"Negative Sarge, I lost hi- AAAGH!"

To late did Rodriguez see the white blur of the elite slip out from behind a power conduit and slash through the back armor of the trooper with its energy dagger. The eight foot tall alien planted a massive hoof on the trooper's chest and reared back with his dagger, prepared to deliver the killing blow when a blue blur tackled it to the ground.

Carter slammed the Ranger into the deck plating, using skills he had picked up over the course of his combat career and daily sparring sessions with Noble Teams CQC expert Noble Four to keep his physically superior opponent off guard. Two left jabs to the jaw kept the alien dazed and from struggling to rise off the ground, allowing Noble One to slash its throat.

Carter looked over to the trooper, "Corporal, you alright?"

David Burgess groaned in pain, but stood up, "Suit was thick enoughâ€| bastard didn't cut anything too important. Ah shit!"

"Commander!"

"What is it Jorge?"

"Their retreating!"

Carter looked up, shocked at the tactical error of his enemies. They

had the soldiers outnumbered, and they had just forced him to break rank to save one of the trooper's lives. If they had only pressed harder they would have forced Jorge to reload, at which time any and all suppressive fire would discontinue and they could swarm the hangar bay with minimal resistance.

"Dot?"

"Covenant Battle Net is currently ordering all available units to intercept two demons attempting to overload the primary plasma conduit."

"Looks like we owe Four and Six a favor," Carter commented.

"Me? Owe that punk a favor? We can't ever tell him!" Jorge insisted.

An explosion rocked the carrier above them, "We may never get the chance toâ€¦"

â€¦

Jun held his M6G out to his right with one hand and fired. The Semi-Armor Piercing High Explosive round didn't hit any Covenant, but rather an angled wall, and ricocheted back into the center room of the comm. relay, punching through a jackal's ribcage and detonating internally. The birdlike alien that had been facing the Spartan had been hiding behind its shield, not letting the marksman see any of his body, but that had never stopped Noble Three before.

Spinning on his heel, Jun slapped the magnum back onto his magnetic thigh plate and swung the barrel of his sniper rifle downwards at an angle, sweeping a minor's leg. The alien fell to the ground with a thud, shields flaring at the contact, and moved to get back up but found itself pressed to the ground by a long sleek barrel.

CRACK!

Jun looked up from his kill and found another elite in his sights.

CRACK!

Noble Three pulled the empty magazine from underneath the bottom of his rifle. Before he could put in another, a red blip on his motion tracker closed in. The Major must have thought it was going to be an easy kill, sneaking up on a demon and cracking its skull, but it never could have accounted for the Spartan's total situational awareness, a trait belonging to all Spartan's, but mastered by Jun.

Using his rifle as a shield, Noble three pushed the Major past him, ripped the knife from his left shoulder, and flung it into the alien's neck.

Green plasma bolts struck his shields, efficiently draining them until Jun simply whipped out his magnum and delivered three perfect shots, all without looking. He stepped behind cover to allow his shields to recharge, reload his weapons, and check his motion

tracker. Three gray blips rolled along the bridge leading to the main console, but those were just the twitching bodies of the three grunts he had just killed, four red blips surrounded a yellow blip on the far side of the room, but Kat had that well in hand. What worried Jun was the five red blips surrounding three yellow blips on the lower level.

"How's everyone doing out there?" Jun asked, his usual chattiness coming to life.

"It's quite the party out here, Jun," Kat replied with a little humor in her voice. From this distance it was easy for anyone to hear Noble Two's magnum barking, and the pained squeals and roars of the Covenant soldiers around her.

"Just wonderful, Spartan," Kelly's voice sounded slightly strained, probably because she was shouting over the sound of three M7 Caseless Sub-Machineguns, "Really having a blastâ€¦ Concentrate fire on that red elite!"

"Good to hear," Jun remarked as he peaked around the corner, "Was getting worried that our guests were making a mess."

Noble Three found a Major's head in his crosshairs and pulled the trigger, ending its life with extraordinary ease.

"Oh no, Sierra," Kelly continued the joke, "We're the ones making a mess!"

"I say we make Kat pick the place up!" June replied, chuckling at his own joke. A minor above the comm. relay jumped down, but never reached the ground alive as a 14.5 millimeter round ripped its mandibled face apart.

Jun looked up towards the entrance, hoping to snipe any others that may be attempting to drop down, and find them he certainly did, though it really didn't do him any good to spot them coming. Two hunters smashed down onto the center pillar, squishing the bodies beneath them and splitting up, each going after a Spartan on opposite ends of the room.

"Kat we've got incoming!" Jun warned, popping a fresh magazine into his SRS99 and raising the rifle.

CRACK!

A direct hit, shredding the few visible worms along the hunter's neck, and the behemoth stopped in its tracksâ€¦ and laughed. More worms slid in from the monster's body, filling in the gap, and pulled the helmet down to cover more of the vulnerable worms. Jun cursed, stepping back and pulled a grenade from his belt.

Jun pulled the pin and let the lever release, cooking the grenade before tossing it between the hunter's feet. The resulting bang shoved the behemoth forward, and pissed it off.

At the creatures massive roar, Jun smiled, "What, you don't like my cooking?"

Another growling roar, one that shook the walls and the deck plating

emanated from the massive titan. The colony of worms surged forward, faster than what a five and a half ton monster should be able to, and swatted at the Spartan.

The marksman planted his left foot against the flat of the shield and pushed off, launching himself over the massive hunk of metal and dropping himself inside the monster's reach. Jun placed the barrel of his sniper rifle against the creature's helmet and fired, ripping the plate off of the extended worm colony.

"If you didn't like that last one, perhaps you'll enjoy this recipe!"

Jun slammed another fragmentation grenade into the hunter's 'head' and kicked off, putting distance between him and the monster.

BOOM!

Rather than slumping forward, or falling backwards, the hunter split apart at the seams, shooting heavy fragments of armor and spurts of orange blood in three hundred and sixty degrees.

"How bout that cooking?"

"Jun," Kat said sharply from the other end of the platform standing on top of her hunter like she had just slain a dragon, "shut up!"

Noble Three smiled at the female Spartan, and was about to respond when the carrier above them shook with an explosion, "What the hell was that?"

â€|

"Damn it Six! What the hell was that?"

The Lieutenant turned back, somewhat embarrassed of his actions, "In my defense it worked."

"You can't just go around blowing up plasma manifold!" Emile rebuked his superior officer, "What if the whole ship blows up?"

The floor beneath them shook again, "Well, actually it might be."

Another explosion is heard, this time significantly closer, but also significantly less powerful, "Doesn't look like the job'll get done with out us, let's go."

The two Spartans stepped over the charred bodies Six had created when he had fired on an exposed plasma manifold. Elites, brutes, jackals, even two hunters, nothing had been safe from the violent release of plasma.

Reaching the end of the hall, Emile set up in front of the door, pointing his shotgun at the door while Six popped another magazine into his SAW and moved towards the doors holographic controls. A nod from Four and the Lieutenant hit the control.

The door slid open to chaos, an elite major stepped out from a smoke filled room, hand held up to its mouth, coughing violently. Fortunately the elite didn't have to suffer too much longer, considering it no longer had a mouth with which to cough, nor a hand with which to cover its mouth.

Four and Six swept into the smoke filled room, advanced helmets easily adjusting to the low light level and high concentration of airborne particulates, even going so far as to outline figures in the smoke.

"Got a brute, three meters to your right," Six called out, a resounding boom answering him, and flinging the simian creature across the room.

"Two elites, ten o'clock!"

Noble Six answered Emile with a sustained burst from his SAW, ripping the aliens apart.

The two moved through the cloudy room with ease, picking off Covenant as they went, encountering little resistance from the aliens. Grunts, jackals, brutes, and elites were slaughtered in droves, most not even with bullets, but knives. Emile's kukri was dripping with a rainbow of colors, all slowly painting a trail behind him, and Six was clearing a little bit of purple brute blood from the corner of his visor.

Finally the two reached the end of the expansive and twisting room, this one opening up automatically and admitting the two into a much clearer room, one that escaped the destructive results of Six's 'improvising'. The door led to a small corridor, two doors, one directly to their right, and another directly in front.

"Schematics show the primary plasma conduit is just through the door on the right," Six stated robotically.

"Let's bring the boom!"

The door on their right opened up, admitting the two Spartans, but so did the one in front of them, allowing a massive furry ball to slam into Noble Four. The giant ape-like creature smashed Emile into the door frame and backhanded Six into the maintenance room containing the plasma conduit.

The huge Chieftain bent over the skulled Spartan and reared a fist back, preparing to slam it through the engraved visor. Any other Spartan would have been far too slow, but Emile wasn't just any other Spartan. The four fingered fist smashed through the deck plating, missing its target but delivering enough force to simply rip apart one of the strongest metals in the universe.

The Chieftain roared in anger, but before it could reacquire the super soldier below him, two size eighteen boots planted against the simian's chest, throwing it across the room.

"Set the charges Six! This ones mine!"

Before the Lieutenant could argue the door slammed shut, and leaving Six with only one reasonable choice.

Back in the corridor, Emile finally got a good look at his attacker, a brute War Chieftain, at least nine meters tall and weighing a good two thousand pounds. Most War Chieftains wore armor covering their entire bodies that were complete with energy shields, but this one was only wearing simple armor plates across its shoulders, upper arms, and thighs, thankfully covering up the crotch as well. Thick muscles bulged from underneath the armor and a thick grey beard flowed over the simian's chest and contrasted the short, well groomed fur covering its body.

In its hands was an ancient looking gravity hammer, the metal seemed purer, stronger, and the shape of the hammer's head was far smoother and crackled with an energy far surpassing that of any other Emile had ever seen. The blade mounted on the back of the hammer head was more pronounced, extending further out from the back of the hammer, making the weapon look more like a half hammer, half axe that hummed with destructive energy.

"The Mace of Grulkt will crush you!" the beast's guttural voice managed.

Emile cocked his head, his shotgun was firmly on the other side of the door with Six, but his twelve inch kukri was still in his grasp. Sliding the super dense titanium blade from its sheath, Noble Four uttered a retort, "Fifty creds says that the reverse is true."

An ear shattering roar reverberated through the short and wide corridor, deafening all other sounds, and heralding the Chieftain's charge. The massive hammer swung around from Emile's left, but passed harmlessly over his ducking head, shearing the purple metal from the wall and opening up the brute's midsection to a vicious stab from the kukri.

Sweeping to the side and bringing the knife with him, creating a nasty gash running along the beast's left side. Fortunately for the brute, its hide and muscles were so thick the knife was simply unable to reach the vital organs beneath.

Another bellowing roar echoed through the entire ship, but not in pain, in anger. The backend of the hammer swung towards the evading Spartan, only narrowly missing the evading Noble Four and burying the sharpened end in the wall. Emile came to his feet after his midair summersault, and turned to face the massive simian. A one two power punch to the Chieftain's ribs underneath its right shoulder served to do nothing other than shove the massive brute away, but due to the fact that the Mace of Grulkt was buried blade first into the incredibly strong metal, the simian had to let go to put distance between it and the Spartan, exactly what Emile wanted.

Noble Four flipped his razor sharp kukri into the beast's chest, burrowing through thick hide, muscle, and finally bone to bring about the first real indication that the monster actually felt pain, but it would also be its last.

The axe end of the Mace of Grulkt cleaved through the Chieftain's skull, ripping the top half of the brute's head clean off, and showering the room in purple gore.

The door slid open, revealing a much cleaner Noble Six holding

Emile's M45E, "Having fun, Four?"

Emile looked down at the massive body, then at the hammer slung over his shoulder, "Just picking up a souvenir, charges set?"

"Affirmative."

Emile took the shotgun from Six's hands, sliding it onto the magnetic strips on his back and slapped the hammer into both hands, taking point on the return trip. The duo passed through the smoky room with ease, passing through the bodies and smoke at a quick pace, but the twisting pathways of the room kept them from achieving full speed, though the straight shot corridor leading back to the grav lift would allow them to let loose.

As the door leading to the hallway came into sight, so did the fact that the door was open, revealing an elite with a sword in its hands, using the glowing blade to try and peer through the smoke. Emile picked up speed as he spotted the swordsman, holding the hammer out wide. It must have been strange, for the Ultra, standing there, looking at billowing clouds of smoke that the damaged ventilation system couldn't clear and listening to the heavy pounding of footsteps growing ever closer, and ever more rapid. Of course Noble Four couldn't leave anyone in such a state of confusion, so he got rid of the problem, the Ultra's brain.

Emile jumped through the doorway, leaving the headless corpse behind him and charging into the corridor. He swept the first minor's legs with the haft of the hammer, dropping the elite to the floor, and finished by plunging the sharpened spear like end of the hammer into the alien's chest.

A burst of gunfire ripped a major to shreds leaving the last elite all by itself, facing down two Spartans, although not for long. The hammer's head smashed the side of the major's face and snapped the creature's neck.

"Six minutes and forty three seconds," Six said as he and Emile began sprinting down the hall.

"Race ya!"

Six watched as Noble Four gathered an impressive burst of speed, hitting seventy kilometers an hour in a matter of seconds, and pulled away from the Lieutenant. Six growled as the competitive nature instilled in all Spartans kicked in. both Spartans would have appeared as nothing but blurs to any passing Covenant as they raced down the two hundred meter corridor.

Ten seconds and a very upset Lieutenant later and both super soldiers rushed into the room containing their way back, "Get ready to jump!"

Four and Six leapt into the stream of rising hardlight, narrowing their bodies and avoiding as many of the streams of photons as possible, racing down the hundred meter shaft. Just before they each hit the dorsal arch of the corvette's, Emile and Six executed flawless flips, pointing their feet straight down and landing with a powerful thud on the purple hull.

The two flipped down into the comm. room, landing on top of the pile of corpses left by Noble Two, Three, and the pilots.

"Good to see you made it back, Six!" Jun yelled from his cover as he joined the two on their way to the bridge.

"What am I? Chopped liver?"

Kat was by the Spartan's side by the time they reached the hangar, "Always good to see you too, Four, nice hammer."

"I thought so, Commander!" Emile yelled, gathering the navy colored Spartan's attention.

"I take it the mission was a success?"

"Not a success yet sir, timer's at five minutes flat, sir," Six reported.

"Perfect, Dot, get Mr. Bullock up here, he's got a ship to pilot!" Carter barked at the AI.

"Gladly, Noble Leader."

"Four, Six, get on the plasma guns!" Carter continued ordering as he moved on towards the bridge, "We've got two docking arms holding us down and the engineers aren't exactly good shots. Knock em out, and we can get the hell out of here."

Two affirmatives answered the Commander, and so did one Scottish accent, "Oi! Captain, you need me?"

"Affirmative, Mr. Bullock," Carter told the young civilian, "Dot's good but she's not imaginative, I need your skill set to get us out of this mess. Dot what's the time?"

"Three minutes and twenty seven seconds, Noble Leader."

"Status on the docking arms?"

"Both port and starboard docking clamps have been severed, we are clear to leave the assault carrier."

The two men entered the bridge, "Take your seat Patrick, and get us the hell out of here!"

"Aye, aye Captain!" the fiery haired Scott replied, already sitting down in his chair.

"Dot, time?"

"Two minutes, fifty seven seconds, Noble Leader."

"Just enough time!" Patrick exclaimed excitedly, pushing hard on the controls. The tube attached to the dorsal landing pad shattered as the corvette's engines roared to life, accelerating the ship to incredible speeds.

"Dot, are we far enough away?"

"Negative, Noble Leader, we must gain another four hundred kilometers before we are beyond the blast radius."

"Just need to get past this cruiser!" Patrick stated, "Then we can hit the slipspace drive, that'll get us out of the blast!"

"Do it," Carter ordered.

"Then I recommend hanging on to something!"

The corvette lurched downwards, towards the planet below, and the CCS battlecruiser moved to block, lateral plasma lines glowing as the ship began targeting the smaller ship. Just as the cruiser was about to begin firing, the smaller ship turned on its back, slipping over the cruiser's shield barriers, scraping the dorsal shields with its back.

Inside the ship everyone launched forward, throwing them into a wall, sprawling along the floor, and gathering minor injuries. Patrick just managed to keep himself from swallowing the control sticks in front of him as he pulled the ship up, away from Reach.

"I'd recommend that slipspace jump now, NOW!"

A thousand kilometers behind them, the massive assault carrier exploded, vaporizing not only itself, but several ships around it. The shockwave accelerated alarmingly fast towards the corvette, smashing any ship in its path to pieces and bearing down on the small siege ship.

Just before the wave reached the ship, a portal opened up into inky blackness, pulling at the corvette. The purple ship was completely through by the time the wave reached it, but the portal had yet to close. Only a limited amount of the energy managed to impact the ship, but it was more than enough to toss the corvette, throwing it through the slipspace at an irregular vector.

The jump was only supposed to be a short one, and it only took a few seconds for another portal to open up in front of the ship, but this portal was strained, forced. The slipspace drive struggled to open up a rift to regular space after being thrown around. It attempted to open up a portal to the coordinates, but found that the corvette wasn't facing the right direction, wasn't in the right place, and so the drive gathered more and more power, ripping through the eleven dimensions of slipspace, and dragging the Covenant ship through.

Carter stood up from his position flat on his stomach, "Dot, where are we?"

"Unknown, Noble Leader."

Wow, that's a big chapter. Don't expect 30,000 word chapters from here on out. Maybe 10,000 to 15,000 word chapters, that I can do, but there is simply no way I'm going to put this much energy into each chapter, you bastards ain't worth that much work!

**I hope you guys like this new story, as I've said I put a lot of work into this bad boy! **

Now I don't want you guys getting all pissy on me about the Spartan III's seeming overpowered, especially in regards to how I said Emile is faster than Jorge. If you read up on Project CRYSANthemum, you will find a paragraph explaining an exception to the II's superior to the III's rule. The superiority comes from their gene pool, II's are basically all children of members of the ORION project. Well, so are each member of Noble Team, the III's that is. That means the augmentations had the exact same effect on them as it would have had on each Spartan II. As for Emile's abilities in particular, I just figured that if he was Noble's CQC specialist, then he must have incredibly fast reflexes, even for a Spartan. Now I'm not saying that his reactions are as fast as Kelly 087's, but I'd like to think they're damn close! At least faster than most other Spartans, but maybe that's just my bias as Noble Four's number one fan. Now onto the question of why Jorge is so much bigger than the others, it's probably because Jorge is eight feet tall even in armor (yes, that is canon). As in, a foot taller than Master Chief. Jorge is just way taller than anyone!

**Hope you don't mind the ridiculous number of OC's, but I figured that a ship would need a crew, and Dot sure as hell isn't powerful enough to operate an entire ship all by herself. And don't get on my back about the Huragok, there here, their floating snails, and they're helping the Spartans, get used to it. **

I hope you guys don't mind me adding a few weapons that weren't in Reach to the story, but I just think that the UNSC was fully capable of making a SAW long before the war ended, so why not just throw it in? Also, I have a question, what should I do with the Mace of Grulkt? Should it just fade away? Should Jorge use his incredible strength to smash HYDRA mechs to pieces with it? You decide, leave me your thoughts in the reviews.

Speaking of comments and reviews, don't send me any suggestions on Six's name, or names for the ship, I have already reached decisions regarding those particular topics. But if you happen to have any idea's for story arcs or plots you'd like to see me explore, send them to me, I'll certainly think them through.

2. Chapter 2

Yay, another chapter, enjoy.

"Dot, cut the audio," an authoritative voice echoed through the bridge of purple ship.

In that bridge stood fifteen humans, six of them standing in heavy, bulky armor, another six standing in vacuum suits sans the helmets, and another three all in civilian clothing. Of those six standing in bulky armor, four of them were standing with their helmets off, revealing stunned faces that normally showed almost no emotion at all.

The Spartans, UNSC Army Troopers and Pilots, along with the civilians they had picked up along the way to escape Reach had just been watching various data streams a UNSC 'dumb' AI, aka Dot, had compiled for them regarding 'Earth'. After slipping away from Reach, the group had gone about the arduous task of removing any Covenant tracking

devices left on the ship and the various alien weaponry aboard. The task had been expedited somewhat by the four alien engineers aboard, as they were the ones who knew where every tracker on the actual ship itself was.

After they had finally removed all Covenant tracking devices, the crew had then gone about patching the ship up. Again, the alien engineers had been instrumental; the floating snails as Patrick had taken to calling them could fix anything, even molecular damage. The damages were extensive, but they were easily repaired. Armor plating was removed, repaired by the engineers, and replaced. Plasma turrets were taken offline, realigned, and test fired. Damage done to the interior was the last damage to be fixed, though it was logistically the easiest damage to repair.

Since then, the corvette had been attempting to reconnect with the UNSC. Slipping from colony to colony, they found the planets, but none of them showed any sign of human presence, either present or past. It had gotten to the point where they even went back to Reach, only to find it sitting there, a big green ball, perfectly unharmed, and perfectly uncolonized. In a final act of desperation, Noble Two had suggested going all the way to Earth, if there were any human's anywhere, that's where they'd be.

Of course now here they were, in high orbit above the North American continent, watching Dot's summary on the humanity they had found. This Earth was still primitive, they hadn't even left the solar system yet. Computers were still slow, weapon's were still underpowered, and individual countries still went to war with each other, but that's not what had the group stunned.

Fantastical beings populated the planet below. Oh sure most of them were plain ordinary humans but there were plenty of anomalous people down there too. Men and women capable of running faster than cars, lifting tanks, even flying without any assistance from complicated machinery, there were dozens, hundreds of these people down there, and they made no show of hiding their abilities. Different organizations had popped around the globe, consisting of many of these powerful people, the Avengers, the X-Men, the Fantastic Four, and many more.

Shock filled the people standing on the bridge of that ship, as well as dozens of questions, the most common of them being, where were they?

The lead Spartan, Commander Carter, turned towards the group after putting a mute on the news stream they had been watching, "Thoughts."

One of the Spartan's who was still wearing his helmet raised his hand, "Uh, yeah, I got one. Is this some fucking joke?"

"Thoughts, Emile," Carter chastised, "Not questions, I'm sure we've all got enough of those."

This time a Spartan not wearing his helmet spoke up, "We could be back in time."

"Doesn't seem likely," Kat said, "We might have traveled back in time, but that isn't the only thing that happened."

"What do you mean?" Noble One asked his second in command.

"Well I don't know about the rest of you, but I certainly don't recall any superheroes in any of my history lessons," Noble Two elaborated, "If I had to hazard a guess, I'd say we're in an entirely different dimension."

This time it was one of the troopers who spoke up, "A different dimension? How?"

"Well if you think about it," Sarah Travers, one of the civilians and a former chief engineer aboard a freighter, "a slipspace drive already takes us into a different dimension, one where the law of relativity doesn't apply. It's not inconceivable that it could take us to a different dimension, one where there's an alternate Earth and an alternate humanity."

Kat nodded towards the blonde engineer, "Precisely, Commander."

Carter took a look around the room. The Spartans had recovered from their shock fairly quickly, Jorge was calling up all acquired information on one of the super humans, Jun, Emile and Six were looking over his shoulders, and Kat was looking at Carter expectantly. The troopers and pilots had their eyes downcast, looking a little lost. The two civilian engineers looked surprisingly calm, though that was probably due to the fact there were no eight feet tall aliens attempting to exterminate them right now. The pilot, Patrick, was hanging over the backrest of his seat and was actually silent, for now. The sixteenth member of the group, Doctor Elizabeth Sanders, was the only one who seemed unconcerned by the events.

"Anything to add, Doc?"

Beth looked at the Commander, "Oh nothing really, just thinking."

"About?"

"About how absolutely perfect this is," Doctor Sanders elaborated, "About how this would happen to us."

Carter looked confused, "How do you mean?"

"Well think about it," she said, "We were all left behind in some way shape or form. HIGHCOM probably has you, me, and the rest of the UNSC personnel listed as either MIA or KIA, and the civilian records will show Hannah, Sarah, and Patrick as missing, presumably dead. None of us here had any immediate family, no loved ones left behind. If there were better candidates to be stranded in an alternate dimension thenâ€¦ I don't know. The odds are simply incredible."

By the time she was done talking, everyone on the bridge was looking at her, some with melancholy, some with understanding, and Patrick's eyes danced with mirth.

Noble One sighed, looking back towards Earth, "Kat when do you think we ended up here? In this universe, I mean."

"I'd say it was when we were fleeing the Covenant over Reach," Kat said, "The drive was acting funny after that one. Didn't want to work right, had to change a couple of the universal constants to get us back on track. If this dimension has slightly different set of physics than ours, then I suppose we'd have to change those to compensate."

"Could we go back the same way?"

"Oh I suppose, you know, if we had another CAS assault carrier lying around that we could blow up, then I suppose we could initiate another slipspace jump just before the energy wave reaches us, tossing us around inside slipspace before we come out. But even then, we'd have no way of assuring we'd come out in_ our_ universe. We might come out in one with just as many super humans all banded together into some sort of justice league."

Carter rolled his eyes at his Lieutenant Commander's sarcasm, "Alright, I get the point. Do you think you could find a way to get us back?"

Kat nodded, "Sure, I'd need an army of Smart AI's at my beck and call and ten years, but I could do it."

Carter turned away from Kat, looking out the corvette's window and down towards Earth. It would be dawn in the eastern United States in a few hours, and the inaction was killing the group, "Jun, Emile, Six, I have a mission for you three."

â€|

Three hours later and Jun, Emile, and Noble Six stood inside a clothing warehouse, in the men's big and tall section, selecting pants. The shop was otherwise empty, due to the fact the store was not yet open and that the Spartan's were, in fact, stealing the clothes. They weren't worried about being caught, however, they had easily picked the backdoor's lock and avoided the primitive security system and Dot was overriding the security cameras, feeding them a loop while it monitored the Spartans.

"Emile I think your pants are on backwards," Jun said as he looked at the dark skinned man's khaki cargo pants.

"What are you talking about?" Emile asked defensively, "big square pockets in the front where they're easier to reach, and two holsters going back for your sidearms!"

Six, out of his armor for the first time it had been repaired, gave his opinion, "No, I think Jun is right. Remember civilians don't just walk around with sidearms. I think those square pockets go on the back and the zipper is on the front?"

Jun slid on his pair of pants, "Yeah, that makes more sense," he shifted uncomfortably, "Why would civvies wear something so uncomfortable? I mean they're chafing really badly!"

Emile looked down, "I think we forgot to get underwear."

Six blinked, "What's underwear?"

"When I was a kid, I used to wear underwear," Emile explained, "Putting those on is one of the few memories I still have."

Noble Six stood back, "Yeah, I suppose that would make sense. Jun, go get us some underwear."

"Sure thing, LT," the tan Spartan replied, moving off towards a display rack with the words undergarments displayed on a sign.

Six sighed and said, "How do we not know this stuff?"

"Cause we were kidnapped at a young age, stripped of most of our most precious memories and forced to fight an unbeatable enemy?"

"Well, yeah," Six said back to Emile, "but you'd think we'd have to get dressed to do that!"

"Yeah, but we wore one piece jumpsuits during our training. Then we wore SPI armor which also had an one piece jumpsuit underneath, then we started wearing MJOLNIR," Emile said, trying to rationalize their lack of understanding.

"Well, MJOLNIR is far less complicated."

Emile snorted a laugh, "I gotta agree with you on that one, LT."

Jun appeared around a rack of clothing and tossed each of them a small plastic package, "Here, these were the biggest ones they had."

"Jun," Six started, "These are women's plus size thongs."

Jun and Six heard the snapping of an elastic band on flesh and turned to find Emile standing there wearing a lacy red thong.

"Ooh," Emile said in appreciation, "This feels smooth!"

"Emile take it off."

"Bu-"

"That's an order!" Six turned to Jun, "And find us some men's underwear, and do it fast. This store opens at eight hundred hours."

Five minutes later all three Spartan's stood in front of a mirror, full ensemble, getting used to their civilian clothing. Jun wore an olive shirt, one of the biggest ones they had, that was practically skin tight. The khaki cargo pants were not quite as tight, but he certainly didn't have to wear a belt to keep it from falling around his ankles. A pair of size sixteen casual boots stuck out from underneath the long pants and to complete the outfit was one of three matching Rolex's Emile had snatched from a jewelry case.

Looking to his left, Noble Three caught Noble Four standing with his shirt off, running a thumb along the two new scars on his chest left from the Zealot's sword. The top scar ran from just below his collar bone to the top of his sternum and a few centimeters below that began the second scar from the second prong of the energy sword, this one

ending just below level with the sternum.

"You have an unhealthy attachment to your scars, Four," Jun commented.

"Shut up," Emile replied as he put his grey shirt back on, "I just never got to see it before I was already back in my armor, that's all."

To the two Spartan's right, Six was looking into his reflections deep blue eyes. He was wearing the same outfit as the other two, khaki pants, size eighteen casual boots, but his shirt was white, to hide just how pale he really was. Brown hair cropped short, military style, blue eyes, and two thin scars running diagonally across his right cheek, probably from a lucky jackal or skirmisher.

"Ready, LT?" Jun asked Noble Six.

"Sure," the Lieutenant replied, "Emile go grab three casual jackets, we're going to need to conceal our sidearms."

Four just nodded and walked off to a different section of the store, leaving Three and Six alone by the mirrors. Jun looked at the pale Spartan for a bit, taking in his appearance really for the first time. Sure they had ridden down together in the Pelican unarmored, in fact they had ridden down naked, but this was the first time they hadn't been busy doing something else.

"Store personnel will be arriving soon to get the store ready to open," Six said, "We should be out of here in the next ten minutes."

"Ah, it won't be a problem," Jun casually assured his superior officer, "By the way, LT, what are we going to call you in public?"

Blue eyes flitted up to Jun's face, "What?"

"Well we can't call you LT the entire time, and Noble Six or just Six isn't really any better."

"Well, um," Six stumbled for a bit before spotting an employee's nametag on the ground. Leaning over to pick it up, the Spartan scrutinized it for a second before reading the name displayed, "Daniel, that'll work for now."

The bald Spartan smirked, "Sure thing, Danny boy!"

Emile came back, three tan leather jackets in hand, "What's going on?"

"LT, just picked a name," Jun said.

"Really?" Emile said, "Is it Lieutenant Buzzkill?"

"For the duration of this mission you are to call me, Daniel," 'Daniel' told Noble Four, "and any further jokes about my mood will result in a formal reprimand."

"Yes sir, Lieutenant Daniel Buzzkillington, sir!"

"Fuck off, lets get out of here," Six said as he led the way to the back of the store.

"Right, anyway," Emile said as he followed, handing Jun a jacket, "I also managed to find shoulder holsters. They're a little small for the M6C/SOCOM, but they will fit and manage to keep the weapon's profile hidden."

"Where'd you find that?" Daniel asked, wondering why a civilian clothing store would have a weapon holster on sale.

Emile shrugged, "You guys looked like you were talking, so I checked outside the door and had a look at the rest of the mall. Something called Scheels next door, had em on sale."

The three Spartan's stepped outside, jackets on, weapons concealed, and as casually as they could, walked down the parking lot. A couple of cars were already parked outside, but none of them were occupied. Most of them were probably overnight cleaners that had been elsewhere in the mall. The sun was just peaking over the horizon as the three men stepped onto the sidewalk.

"You know," Jun began, "We're going to need transportation. And money."

"Transport first," Daniel ordered, "Then communications, then money."

"You know if we had money we could just buy transport and comm. pieces," Emile pointed out.

"Then they'd have us on record," Six came back, "I sure don't have an identity set up in this universe, do you?"

"Well if we're going to be stealing transport," Jun said with a sly grin, "Then I know just where to go!"

Jun started jogging down the street, of course jogging for a Spartan meant they were going just under the speed limit of the suburban town. It was a Sunday morning, and as a result most of the roads were fairly clear, though every time they did come across a car on the road the three slowed down significantly.

Only fifteen minutes later the three Spartan's arrived at Johnson's Ford Motors, a fairly large car lot. Plenty of sedans, SUV's, trucks, and muscle cars lined the lot, and even better was the closed sign hanging in the window of the office building.

"Jun, how'd you know this was here?" Daniel asked as the three jogged up to the dealership.

Emile moved to the door, slipping his kukri out of its hip sheath and slipped the door jam, while Jun answered the Lieutenant, "Spotted it on the way down when I went up to the cockpit to escape the civvies' stares."

"Yeah, what was up with that? You'd think Hannah and Sarah had never seen a naked person before," Emile asked as he popped the door open.

Daniel shrugged, "I don't know, but did you see the way Kelly was blushing when we showed up to the Pelican?"

"Hell, how many times did we have to get Hannah and Sarah back on track with the briefing?" Emile pointed out.

"Too many, didn't really like the way Sarah was staring at me that's for sure," Jun said as he approached the general manager's office, "Found the office, how much you want to bet the keys are in here?"

Jun moved over to a steel box on the wall. There was a paper note on the front of the box that had black writing on it, "Looks like this is it! What do you guys want to drive?"

"Something with a hell of a lot of space," Emile said, "Cause I sure as hell ain't sitting in the back seat and I sure as hell won't listen to your bitching!"

Six was sitting at the manager's desk, flipping through a booklet on several model's of vehicles outside in the lot, "Lets get a four door pickup, we won't have to crouch down to get in there, and it's got plenty of room both in the front seats and back seats."

Jun shrugged, "Sounds good, soâ€¦ what? What models are the trucks?"

"Grab the keys for an F-250 Super Duty," Daniel ordered, "That should suit our needs nicely."

"Yes sir!"

"Shotgun!" Emile shouted, much to Jun's chagrin.

"You always get shotgun!" he whined.

"Uh, cause I got a shotgun," Emile replied flippantly as he walked over to the line of F-250's, "So, what color?"

Six sighed in exasperation, "Why the hell do civvies have so many options? We'll go with the tan one."

"Alright, desert camo!" Jun said excitedly as he jumped into the back seat.

Six and Emile sat down in the truck, the former staring at the controls for a second. Emile took notice of Daniel's confusion, "Something wrong, sir?"

The Lieutenant looked back at Noble Four, "It's just that you'd think that a warthog's driver's seat and one of these things would look the same, but I couldn't even tell you what some of these gauges are."

Jun leaned over Daniel's shoulder from the backseat and pointed at two of the gauges, "Well that's velocity in miles per hour, and I think that one's rotations per minute."

Emile leaned over, "Yeah, and I think that one is fuel."

"No, no, I think that's battery power, the one below it is fuel," Six corrected.

Jun pointed at the buttons on the center piece, "What are these for?"

Daniel looked down at one of the buttons and read the white text, "Sirius XM radio, ah! It's a long range radio system!"

Emile smiled excitedly, "Perfect, turn it on and lets see if we can get the Commander."

Six turned the key and the diesel engine roared to life. Each of the Spartan's could hear and feel the engine rumbling beneath them, giving off a sense of power. The dash lit up, all of the small LED lights blinking to life as power flooded through the circuitry.

Emile was grinning, "I like this thing!"

Jun grimaced, "A little loud don't you think?"

"Just adds to the appeal, Three," Noble Four smirked as he ran a palm over the dash.

Daniel looked over the controls, "I'm going to get us out of here, use that radio to try and contact the Commander."

"Sure thing, sir," Emile replied.

"Daniel, from now on, as long as we're in our civvies, you call me Daniel," Six ordered.

"Yes sir" Daniel, Sierra 239 said before leaning over and hitting a few buttons on the radio. Nothing happened at first until he saw a button with a power symbol decaled on it. Smirking, Emile pressed the button and expected to be greeted by static or radio chatter, but was instead greeted by a most alarming noise

"What is that?!" Daniel shouted from his spot behind the wheel. The Lieutenant was cringing away from the radio, unfortunately putting him closer to the speaker in the truck's door.

Jun offered an opinion through clenched teeth, "It sounds like an adolescent girl squealing out the word 'baby'!"

"Shut it off!" Six ordered, Emile couldn't comply fast enough.

"Yeah," he said looking up at his superior officer, "I don't think this thing is a comm. system."

Jun looked around the front of the vehicle and spotted something in front of Emile, "Hey, Four, open that compartment up, see if there's something in there."

The Spartan popped the handle, opening the glove box and found a booklet inside, "Check it out, a manual!"

"Read it, see if you can find anything about a GPS system."

Emile flipped to the table of contents, "You better believe this baby has a GPS system! Built in too!"

"Can you operate it?"

"Should be able to, lets just flip this here andâ€|" Emile watched a blank touch screen on the dash turned on, displaying a menu, "There we go, what do you want to do now?"

"We need to find an electronics store, or something that would contain communications devices capable of integrating into the digital mainframe present. That way Dot can hook us up with a direct line to the Commander," Daniel explained.

"I can find one for you, though we'll need money to buy one you realize," Emile pointed out.

Jun spoke up from the backseat, "We could always steal some, it's only o eight hundred hours. Sure some civvies might be up and working, but according to Hannah and Sarah most of these people will probably still be asleep on a Sunday. Hell we could probably find a store that isn't even open on Sunday's."

"I don't like the idea of us becoming habitual thieves," Six said from the front seat, "but we'll need a solid connection to Dot before we can acquire currency. Four find us an electronics store."

"Already on it, boss," Emile said, tapping the touch screen, "There we go, looks like we're about half a mile away from something called Jersey Electronics, whatever the fuck that is."

Daniel looked up at the GPS screen, seeing a red arrow indicate a left turn up ahead, "This thing shows you where to turn? Why not just show a map of you, your objective, and the roadways in between?"

Four shrugged, "I don't know civvies are weird. Looks like that's it up ahead."

Six looked up and saw a small brick building standing on a corner block, a small cement parking lot out front. The Spartan's superior eyesight easily picked out the closed sign on the front of the store's glass doors, "Jun, I want you to go, Emile and I will circle the block. By the time we get back I expect you to be done."

"Sure thing, Daniel," Three said as he popped the driver's side backdoor and slid out onto the asphalt.

Jun approached the entrance quickly and quietly as he heard the diesel pickup behind him move off. Removing his combat knife, the Spartan cut the deadbolt and pushed the door open. The inside of the store was spacious, if a little unorganized. There was a customer service desk directly in front of him that was put right in the middle of the room, a few isles directly to his right were full of electronics, and it looked like the store continued on to the left, but was obscured by a tan colored wall.

He hopped over the customer service desk and sat down at one of the computers, "Excuse me but I'm looking for phone to fit my crazy alien killing lifestyle," Jun joked as he easily passed the primitive firewalls and began looting through the database, "Can you recommend one that won't crack if a hunter knocks me on my ass?"

Jun continued to easily run through the computer's various safety measures as though they weren't there. Noble Three may not be Noble Team's tech expert, but he was easily the second best when it came to hacking, decrypting, and repairing various electronics. As a result, the primitive firewalls were no match for the Spartan's rapid fingers.

"Here we go!" Jun muttered as he found an appropriate model. Grabbing three boxes from underneath the desk, he pulled the large flat devices from their boxes, inserted a charged battery, and turned them on, "Gonna need service first!"

More rapid typing and soon all three smart phones were added onto someone else's data plan. They wouldn't suffer a ridiculously huge increase in their bill, however. The Spartan's just needed to access a network so Dot could establish communications, once that was done, the phones would be disconnected from the data plan and no one would be the wiser.

Jun jumped back over the desk and walked out of the store just as the tan truck pulled up. He easily slid into the back seat, and the truck kept going, "Got em, these 'cellular phones' should be able to link up with Dot."

Emile and Daniel both grabbed one from Jun, turning it on and staring at the screen. Nothing happened. They were connected to something called 4G, but either Dot couldn't access them, or couldn't detect them. They were, after all, just three specks in a nearly infinite sea of data.

"Maybe we should use this 'Google' bar up here at the top," Emile suggested.

Daniel nodded, "Everyone enter Dot's serial number, that should grab her attention."

!"

Back on the corvette, fourteen people were scrambling through the ship. Jorge, Sarah, and Sergeant Rodriguez were in the port side cargo bay, counting and indexing the various weapons and ammunition. Kat, Hannah, and Corporal Burgess were in the starboard cargo bay, cataloguing the various scavenged vehicles and performing maintenance upon them with two of the engineers. The pilots along with Corporal Rayne were in the hangar bay, counting the ammunition in the fighter's guns and repairing minor burns on armor with the other two engineers. Doctor Sanders was in her medbay, watching the news streams Dot was picking up as she catalogued her medical supplies.

On the bridge stood the final two members of the motley crew. Carter sat on a new chair stationed by one of the consoles and was reading threat assessments compiled by Dot, currently a villain named Rhino, and Patrick sat at his usual spot at the helm, keeping the ship in

high orbit.

Sighing, Patrick swung his chair around to look at the Commander, "What are we going to name her?"

Noble One looked up from his console screen, "Her? Who's her?"

The young Scott held out his arms and extended his legs in the chair in exclamation, "The ship! What are we going to name the ship?!"

Carter furrowed his brow, "Why do we need to name the ship?"

Patrick scoffed, "Well firstly," he held out one finger and tapped it, "She's mighty beautiful. I mean she's got engines that make a carrier's look like a cigarette lighter, hull shinier than a diamond, and a lovely seductive shape."

He extended another finger, "Second, she's tough. This little girl took more beatings in the skies over Reach than my father's favorite bar stool. Cruisers, battlecruisers, a damned assault carrier, nothing could put our old girl down."

Another finger shot out, "And that brings me to my last point, she's damn near unparalleled in combat record! Let's see, her first two kills were those little cruisers, not much I know, but they were flawless kills. The third was a damned battlecruiser, one of the mainstays of the Covenant fleet and one tough bastard to put down, but this ship handled perfectly. Of course those three are just the toppings, the real meat of her combat record is the fleet of seventeen ships she blew up!"

Carter tilted his head, "The corvette did not destroy any of these ships, the explosion from the assault carrier did."

"And you prove my point!" Patrick exclaimed, "We don't have the weapons to kill seventeen Covenant capital ships, so we improvised! This girl performed flawlessly, and using unconventional tactics, destroyed a fleet that could have smashed an entire colony's defenses!"

Carter shook his head and sat back in his seat, "Alright, you've convinced me, what should we christen the ship, Mr. Bullock?"

Patrick stood out of his seat, "What was that name you usedâ€¦ When we were talking to that assault carrier?"

Carter blinked, "I used the name 'Noble Vengeance' when I first contacted the CAS, but I never used the same name twice, had to keep them guessing, why?"

"Aren't you guys called Noble Team?"

"All Spartan's aboard this ship are a part of Noble Team, yes."

"And from what I heard you guys were stationed on Reach?"

Carter sighed, "Ever since the Battle of Fumirole, yes."

"Then I guess destroying that fleet over Reach was a sort of Vengeance, right?"

Noble One raised an eyebrow at the young pilot, "Noble Vengeance? Your sure? When we get back to the UNSC this thing will most likely be torn from the inside out, studied from every possible angle, this ship won't ever see active service again."

Patrick sat back, "You really think we'll be able to get back that easily, sir?"

"Why do you call me sir? Your not a soldier," Carter asked.

"You are a Spartan," Patrick replied, "and Commander of this ship and I'm your pilot, that's worth a few sirs every now and then, ain't it? But you never answered my question."

Carter leaned back into his chair, "Honestly, Mr. Bullock? No, I don't think we'll be getting back to the UNSC anytime soon, maybe we'll never get back butâ€¦ I have to keep the hope that we'll be back in eight years."

"Why eight, sir?"

The Commander grimaced, "That was the latest projection. Eight years until the total decimation of all UNSC assets. Another twenty to completely annihilate the human race, but after the UNSC has been destroyed, all humanity can do is run."

"Jaysus," Patrick breathed, "That ain't goodâ€¦ do you think there's any chance for the human race back there?"

"Possibly, depends on whether the package was worth it," Carter admitted.

"Package? What package?"

Noble One looked up at the pilot with a glare, "You already know one of the UNSC's highly guarded secrets, I'm not about to let you in on another one."

The pilot nodded and leaned back into his seat, smiling sadly, "You know we probably won't get back in time, right? It'll take decades for us to get back, if we do at all, but there is a humanity here, now."

"What are you suggesting, Mr. Bullock?"

Patrick shook his head, "I'm not sure, maybe just that you can fulfill your oaths to 'Protect Earth and all Her Colonies' here."

Carter looked down, furrowing his brow, then looked up, about to speak, but was interrupted by the starboard door opening up, admitting Kat, Kelly, and Marcus to the bridge.

Kat stood at attention, as did the other two, "Reporting in, sir."

Noble One stood up and faced the three, "Let's begin with the

firearms and ammunition," he said, tilting his head towards the Sergeant.

Marcus stepped forward, "Thirty MA37 ICWS with four thousand rounds, twenty three M392 Designated Marksman Rifles with eight hundred and fifty five rounds, ten BR55's with two thousand rounds, five SRS99 SAS Anti Materiel's with three hundred and twenty four rounds, eighteen M6J PDWS with one thousand and fifty roundsâ€|"

Carter held up a hand, "Lets stick to what kind of weapons we have, we'll worry about quantities later."

"Ah, yes sir," Rodriguez said, somewhat embarrassed, "We have a couple of SPNKR Launchers, only a few M739's but a lot of ammo, just three M6 Grindell/Galilean Nonlinear Rifles, we even have a few new special operations weapons."

The Commander tilted his head, "What kind of special operations weapons?"

"Well you know of the M7 Caseless Sub-Machinegun, well the Trafalgar had a few new prototypes for a new model of the M7 called the M7S. Basically just an SMG with a silencer, but there is a telescoping holographic sight, and an extended stock. Then of course there's the M6C SOCOM's the pilots brought with them, but we've also have a few dozen underslung forty mike mikes and shotties for the MA37's, not to mention a few cases of High Explosive rounds for the SRS99. Plus a few new explosive weapons I'm looking forward to trying out."

"Such as?"

"Something called a Sticky Detonator, a pistol that shoots packets of C12 basically, and an Asymmetric Recoilless Carbine, a railgun."

"Very good, is that it?" the Commander asked.

Marcus looked down at the pad, "Uh, that's it for weapons, of course we have plenty of ammunition for the Sabres, Pelican, even the Sparrowhawk and the Falcon. Missile pods for the Sabres and Hawk, and we snatched fourteen Archer missile pods from the Trafalgar."

The Commander nodded, "Good work, grab twelve of each weapon, for the ones you can of course, and put them down in the armory below us. Kat, report."

The Lieutenant Commander stepped forward as Marcus left the bridge to carry out Carter's orders, "Jorge sure didn't skimp on the salvage operations. We've got three Warthogs sitting in the cargo bay, two of them are your average hogs, mounted with LAAG's, but the other one we got in there has a M68 ALIM."

Carter rose an eyebrow, "A Gauss Hog? Good, what else?"

"One Scorpion, very nice condition, but we've only got twelve shells for the main gun. but what really interests me is the Revenant still tucked away in the back corner. I hopped in, seems to work but I haven't had a chance to try out the plasma mortar. Engineers seem to think everything's in working order."

The Commander nodded, "Very good, Kat. Organize the vehicles in the bay so the Pelican can easily pick them upâ€ including the Revenant."

"Yes sir," Kat nodded as she moved back into the ship.

Carter turned to the last section head, "Lieutenant, report."

Unlike the other two, Kelly simply stood where she was as she didn't have to separate herself from the others, "All birds are fueled and ready to go sir. The ammunition for the guns that Marcus was talking about, well I've already taken the liberty of having Mayweather and Graves go and grab some, top off the ammo drums."

"Fairly simple report, short and sweet," Carter stated, "I never asked, how did the flight down to the surface go?"

At the mention of the Pelican ride, Kelly's face grew beat red, "Uhâ€ it wasâ€ umâ€ veryâ€ informative, sir."

Carter tilted his head, "Informative? Were you listening in on the debrief?"

"There was plenty of debriefing sir," Kelly admitted, "In fact your Spartans weren't wearing any at allâ€ sir."

Carter blinked, "Of course they weren't wearing clothes, all they had was MJOLNIR and they couldn't just leave that in a dumpster."

Kelly's face was still flushed, "Yeah, but they could have wrapped something around their, um, you knowâ€"

This time it was Patrick who spoke up, "Their trouser snakes?"

Kelly was on the verge of tears with how much she was blushing, "More like trouser anacondas."

The Commander frowned, "Perhaps I should have them purchase some clothing while they are down there. We can't stay in our armor forever and obviously you and the other non-Spartan's would not appreciate us walking around naked."

"Oh I don't know," Patrick said, "That Catherine, she's a fine example of ladyâ€ I'll shut up now."

"Good idea," Noble One said, turning his glare away from the pilot, "Lieutenant, I want you to take the Sabres out for a spin, get us a good look of the rest of the planet, see if there are any anomalies, any space stations, anything."

"Yes, sir," Kelly turned to leave, but stopped and turned around, "Sir permission to grab a bite to eat first?"

"Granted," Carter replied, "Dot make a general announcement, twenty minute break. Pilot I want those skids up in thirty."

Lieutenant Anderson smiled back at the Spartan, "Yes sir."

As the female pilot left the bridge, Patrick turned to the Commander,

"Sergeant seemed a littleâ€¦"

"Green?" Carter asked rhetorically, "You'd be right. He's only been in the service for two years, made Sergeant directly out of basic due to his apparent natural leadership abilities. Highly skilled marksman, a preference for long range assault weapons, adept with a combat knife, and an incredible tendency for survival."

Patrick tilted his head, "Sounds like that came straight from a report."

Noble One nodded, "Directly from his personnel file. I read the report a month ago, just before Operation UPPERCUT when I found he was going to be a part of the initial assault force, his and the rest of the strike force's. The Sergeant's file continues on to state the various operations he's taken part in. His first outpost was a small agricultural colony, there were probably only seven thousand soldiers there and only a few ships in orbit when the Covenant showed up. Fleet was smashed, the ground forces were crushed, but Rodriguez managed to get himself, a small squad, and thirty civilians through the blockade in a civilian transport painted purple."

"Purple?" the Scott asked incredulously, "And the Covvies bought that?"

"The reports suggested that it was brute led fleet," Carter admitted with a sly grin, and soon added a slight chuckle to the pilot's constant laughter, "Get to the hangar, pilot, I'm sure your not looking forward to another course of MRE's but you need something to eat."

"Aye, Captain," Patrick answered, sliding out of his seat, smile still on his face. The Spartan watched him go before striding over to the forward facing window, almost directly next to the helm and looked out onto the planet below.

Daylight had finally spread across most of the western hemisphere, though it was still an hour until daylight hit the Hawaiian Islands, and the clock on Carter's wrist mounted TACPAD showed that the three Spartans he had sent on the reconnaissance mission had hit the dirt nearly two hours ago. If all was going well, the team should be working on a way to contact the corvetteâ€¦

"Commanderâ€¦" Dot's monotonous voice suddenly pierced the silence of the bridge, gathering its sole occupant's attention, "A search engine called Google has just requested information on the most peculiar of topics."

Carter turned towards the holographic screen Dot was currently occupying, "And this is relevantâ€¦ how?"

"The topic happens to be ADT 6849-9, entered by three mobile devices northbound for New York City."

"Can we confirm that it is them?" the Commander asked, "Any way that you can get a look through any cameras near them, get a look at their faces?"

"Affirmative, Noble One, accessing forward facing camera on the second mobile deviceâ€¦ now."

One of the windows facing away towards Earth suddenly had an image supersede that of the big blue-green marble. A dark face was peering directly at the Spartan on the bridge, though it was unlikely that the emerald orbs were actually capable of seeing Carter. The face turned to look at something to his left, Emile's mouth moved, speaking to whomever was to his left in the vehicle.

"Dot, can you connect this ship's comm. system with whatever those things are?"

"Already done, Noble One, would you like to speak with them?"

Carter nodded, "Do it," a pause, then Carter could hear an accented voice speaking.

"â€|aps if we could amplify the signal with the truck's built in radio?"

"Someone you'd like to talk to, Noble Three?" Noble One asked.

The other two's faces appeared on the other windows, Jun's face was pressed up against the screen, apparently he had been holding it quite closely, and past his head Carter could see a roadway past the bed of a pickup truck and a few cars following closely. Noble Six's camera was further away, most likely mounted on the dash of the vehicle they were in, allowing the Commander his first real look at the Lieutenant's pale face.

Six was the one to speak first, looking directly at the camera as though his image were on the screen, which it probably was, "Commander, sir, so far the mission has been a success, though we are currently stuck on a means to procure currency."

"I'll get Dot to work on it right away, in the meantime, you three should proceed further into New York City. I'll send you some coordinates for a parking garage, once your there, ditch the vehicle as I assume it's stolen."

"Jun's idea, sir," Six assured the Commander, "Emile's been researching means to acquire money quickly and legally. Most of them appear to be scams, and the only legitimate means involve gambling. There is mention of some sort of terminal, there are plenty scattered through the city, called ATM's. They always carry some currency internally, and are actually designed to expel specified amounts."

This time Emile spoke up, "You swipe some plastic card, enter a few numbers, make a selection, and POOF! Cash straight in your hands. According to the sign up ahead, this gas station has one. Think Dot could wire us some funds?"

"Dot?"

"Acquiring signalâ€| You now have full access to the ATM nearest your location. When you are ready to use it, enter 6849 into the keypad."

Emile huffed, "Real original Dot. Commander we got any orders once we get into the city?"

"Ditch the vehicle, destroy any evidence of you ever being there, and explore the streets. Pay close attention to any conversations of relevance, any mentions of these super humans or mutants or whatever they call them. I'll contact you at 1600 hours, that's six hours."

â€|

Daniel turned off the interstate, pulling into wide concrete parking lot lined with four rows of gas pumps. The diesel truck pulled up next to a green colored pump, one with the words bio-diesel painted in white on green, lining up the tan truck's gas cap with the pump. He slipped the keys from the ignition and turned towards Emile.

"I'll top the tank off, head inside and grab some money. You said they use something called dollars?" Six asked to the green eyed Spartan's nod, "Grabâ€| three thousand dollars, that should be enough for the day, if they are comparable to credits anyway."

Noble Four nodded and slid from the passenger seat, and walked over to the convenience store. Daniel turned to the other Spartan sitting in the back seat and found him digging through the boxes their phones had come in.

"Jun what are you doing?"

The bald Spartan held up a small earpiece, "Looks like these things came with comm. pieces, they're called bluetooths. Supposedly they link up with our 'phones' and act just like a headset."

Six nodded, "Sounds useful, link them all up. We don't want to have to hold our phones in the middle of combat."

"Yes, sir," Jun replied, already activating the small earpiece and tapping away at his phone's screen.

The pale Spartan opened up the driver's side door and slid out. The pump in front of him was covered in all sorts of little buttons, LED screens, and levers. It didn't take long to figure out how to get the pump working, and soon gas was being pumped into the large truck, at an agonizingly slow pace. When the fluid finally stopped flowing, Daniel disconnected the fuel line from the truck and walked towards the convenience store.

As soon as the Spartan stepped through the glass door, he immediately spotted the other enhanced soldier in the store, considering everyone else in there was doing their best not to stare at him. Long strides quickly took him towards the back of the store where the ATM was and bringing him alongside Emile who was standing behind a frail old woman who was currently using the machine.

"Daniel," Noble Four greeted, "Been waiting a little while, but I think she's almost done."

Six just nodded, watching the old woman peer at the screen through thick glasses, and quickly began to lose his patience.

"You've got to be kidding me," he muttered under his breath. The

frail silver haired woman had been staring at the screen for five minutes, and had yet to touch a single button. Finally she reached out with a shaking hand and pressed a button, signaling the machine to spit out a few green paper bills.

"Finally," Emile whispered as he slid past the old woman and quickly assessed the machine. He punched in Dot's four digit serial number into the pad and was greeted with a number of options. Selecting withdrawal, Four typed in three thousand, and was greeted with an error.

"Apparently this machine doesn't carry that amount of money on it," he said to the Lieutenant.

"Go with the highest amount then, we don't want to run out before the day is over."

Emile nodded and punched in two thousand, this time getting a confirmation as the machine spat out twenty one hundred dollar bills, each adorned with a chubby man's face.

"Holy shit," an accented voice to the two Spartan's right said, "That's a lot a cash!"

The voice belonged to a man in a plaid flannel and faded blue jeans. The man himself was significantly shorter than the Spartans, but was certainly not a small man. His skin was slightly pale, though weathered, and his face adorned a thick mustache and the whispery strands of a mullet peaked around each side of his neck.

"You boys sure rollin in the dough!"

Emile looked at Daniel before responding, "Uh, yeah. Been in the military for quite a while, have a lot of back pay comin."

The man shook his head, "I'll say, that your truck out there? The Ford?"

This time the Lieutenant answered, "Yes, just bought it quite recently, actually, why?"

The man waved his hand dismissively, "Just saw the dealership name on there. Thought about getting one myself, you boys know if they've got anymore down there?"

Daniel nodded, "There were at least four others in the lot when we got ours."

The man nodded and moved towards the register where his family was standing. Six looked at Emile with a raised eyebrow, receiving a shrug in response, and started towards the register as well, intent on buying their gas and getting out of there, but halfway across the small store there emerged a terrible roar.

This time it was Four who raised an eyebrow, "Hungry?"

"Well we didn't eat breakfast, or anything the last two days since we were trying save ration packs. Perhaps we should get something to eat."

The dark skinned Spartan nodded towards a rack of food in the shape of circles, covered in cheese, meat, and some vegetables, "Looks like they got plenty ofâ€¦ whatever that is. Smells good to."

Daniel shook his head and said, "Carter told us to go deeper into the city, to observe and learn. A fuel station probably isn't the best place to do it. I think we should head into the city, find a restaurant of some sort, one with an open atmosphere, and eat there."

â€¦

"Wow," a blonde waitress exclaimed as she watched the three biggest men she had ever seen stuff more food down their mouths, "You boys were hungry!"

The bald one with tattoos looked up from his basket, "Excuse me, but what was this?"

The waitress looked down at the order ticket she had written, "Um, it was a thirty piece shrimp basket, made for three peopleâ€¦"

"Yes, I would love two more of these, right away, thank you," the tan man said as he grabbed five cheeseballs and threw them into his mouth.

The man's green eyed friend turned to her, "Yeah, I'd like another of these, too," he said, pointing to the empty plate that had once held a thirty ounces meant for two people, "and some of theseâ€¦ what are they called?"

"Curly fries?"

"Yes! Two extra large orders of curly fries, please!"

She turned to the last man in the group, this one significantly paler than the others and asked, "Well, what about you? Would you also enjoy an absolutely ridiculous amount of extra food?"

The man's mouth was full, as he was chomping down on his second half pound burger stuffed with all the extra condiments, so instead of speaking he pointed to the burger in his left hand and held up two fingers. The waitress nodded and wrote it down on the meal ticket, before looking back up with a forced smile, "Your food should be ready in about forty five minutes, would you fellas like something more to drink?"

The tattooed man held up his glass, "Whatever this was, it was exquisite!"

"Diet Coke?"

"Yes! We would all love more of this Diet Coke!" he exclaimed, overly excited about the prospect of more carbonated water with caramel coloring and artificial flavoring.

"Sure thing," she sighed as she wrote down the rest of their orders, "and how will you be paying for this?"

The pale, blue eyed man held up a finger and reached down into his

coat pocket, pulling out an incredibly fat wad of hundred dollar bills. He swallowed the last bit of food in his mouth and asked, "How much will this be?"

"Uh, I can't give you an exact amount yet, but with what I have written down, I'd say a hundred and fiftyâ€¦"

Ashley nearly gasped when the man threw down three hundred dollar bills, put the rest in his pocket, and handed her the three bills, saying, "Keep the change. You've been very patient."

Emile watched the girl walk off with their glasses as he stuffed more of the delicious curly fries into his mouth, "You know, we keep spending like this, we'll need more money soon."

Jun leaned in to the table, "I think I see a way of acquiring more. You see that table over there? The game they're playing on it? Well I've seen them betting money on it, not much, but I bet I could convince them to raise the stakes."

Daniel turned towards the table, observing the characters standing around it and the table itself. The men standing around it were all wearing suits and fedoras, apparently adhering to some sort of 1920's cultural fair dress code. They all held sticks approximately five feet long, and used the sticks to hit a white ball into various colored and striped balls, causing the colored or striped balls to fall into the various pockets lining the table. The waitress came back holding three large glasses of dark liquid, and Six decided to ask her about what she knew about the people there.

"Oh those guys are always in here. Actually made this bar pretty famous. The guy in the grey suit?" she said nodding towards the man lining up a shot on a black ball, "He once hustled Tony Stark out of eighty grand at that table. If you guys think you can play them, they'll go as high as you want."

Daniel looked back to Noble Three, "You sure about this Jun?"

Jun smiled, "Don't worry, Danny-Boy! I've been watching them for a while now, I think I got the rules down."

The pale Spartan shrugged and tossed the rest of the money to the tan Spartan, "Don't screw up!"

â€¦

The three Spartans were walking down the sidewalk, Jun smiling cockily as he patted the check for twelve grand in his right pocket. Daniel and Emile shared a glance as they walked a few steps behind the tattooed super soldier. The pool players had thought they had an easy mark when it came to the big man, and were eager to take the Spartan's sixteen hundred dollars from him, only to find themselves beaten soundly. A flashy smile and a quick quip about beginner's luck had them back to the table, double or nothing. This pattern continued until the head of the little hustle squad decided to play the Spartan. A bet of twelve thousand dollars against Jun's six thousand soon had the super soldiers walking around with six thousand dollars cash, and a twelve thousand dollar check.

"I thought Nicko's eyes were going to pop out of their sockets when I

jumped the eight ball off of the bumper and over his nine into the corner pocket!" Noble Three reminisced, "Or Paul's face when I hit every single ball in right off the break!"

"Yeah you sure showed them," Emile muttered as he maneuvered around a younger couple, "Now all we need is someone to knock you down a few pegs."

"I'll be sure to schedule you two in a sparring session," Six assured Four with a bleach white smile, one which Emile returned.

Of the Spartans of Noble Team, Noble Six may have the highest kill count, but Emile was the deadliest member of Noble Team in hand to hand and close quarters, easily one of the deadliest Spartans in close quarters of all time. Emile was in the possession of reaction times rating in the supernatural. All Spartan III's of Noble Team were exceptions to the rule of being inferior to the Spartan II's, but Emile was one of the few that surpassed most II's in one area, reflexes.

All Spartans, be they II's or III's had reflexes too fast to be measured, no human could keep up, and no measuring systems were accurate enough, but soon after being deployed it was obvious that Emile was on another level entirely. Whenever elites would move in to use their swords, they never seemed to get past raising them up to strike. Instead they fell dead before they could follow through, brutes always died before they had a chance to use their vicious blades mounted on every firearm, jackals and grunts all tried to run, but never could get away from the Spartan.

Every sparring session anyone else had against him always ended the same, with the opponent on the ground, groaning in pain. Even Jorge, the massive, indomitable, indestructible Jorge lost to Emile. Not all the time, the Spartan II was probably the strongest Spartan alive, but certainly most of the time. Strength was useless against someone you simply couldn't hit, or even see in some cases.

Jorge often compared the emerald eyed Spartan with another super soldier he once knew from training, Kelly 087. The massive Hungarian often teased Emile that as fast as he was, he would never be as fast as a girl, something Four never found quite as humorous.

What he did find humorous, was the idea of wiping the sparring mat with Jun. The bald Spartan was being cocky, and Noble Three had always rubbed Noble Four the wrong way. Emile may respect Jun's marksman ship, his ability on the battlefield, but there was nothing he loved more than knocking that tattooed jackass down a few pegs, though it was all in good fun.

Three continued walking, apparently not having heard their conversation, or trying not to show how much he was worried about being thrown around by the faster Spartan. Jun raised his hand to point at a building ahead, "There, Carter said we should get some clothes, that's probably a good place to start."

Daniel looked at the building, it appeared to be another mall, though this one was much larger than the one they had been in nearly eight hours earlier, "Sounds good. Jun, you should head over to the men's clothing store, see if you can find something big enough for Jorge. If you have any questions just type them into your phone, I'm sure

Dot'll answer."

"Got it, Daniel," Jun confirmed as the Lieutenant peeled two thousand dollars from the wad of cash and handed it to him.

"Emile, we'll need large amounts of food. I'd recommend going into that store over there, next to the mall. Just ask your phone what we'll need, and I'm sure you'll be provided with the answer," Daniel ordered as he began peeling off another two thousand dollars.

Four grabbed the money from Six's hands and started for the store before stopping and turning back towards the Lieutenant, "And what'll you be doing?"

"I'll go grab the truck from the parking garage and get the last of what we need. When you're ready for pickup, call me."

Daniel crossed the street towards the tall concrete structure where he and the others had parked. While he was walking, he pulled out his phone and began typing, essentially asking Dot what he was supposed to get. The various crewmembers aboard the corvette had supplied Commander Carter with their requests, clothing, food, and Daniel's designated task, women's products.

Six frowned as he looked at the list provided for him. Most of them were obvious, soap, shampoo, deodorant, but the female crew members' list was far more substantial, containing items the Spartan had never heard of before. As he pulled the driver's side door open, Daniel's gut feeling told him that acquiring all of these items may prove to be problematic.

It was a short drive across the road and into the massive parking lot of the mall, but a much longer walk across the asphalt into the double glass doors of the building's entrance. Once inside, his presence went unnoticed, something that had yet to happen anywhere he or the others went. Even on the street people were often doing double takes when it came to the three seven foot tall men. The restaurant had been full of instances where mothers would scold their children for staring at them, where men at the bar would constantly glance at them from the corner of their eye, though that may have been because they were making quite a scene, eating several helpings of meals designed to feed entire families.

Daniel was almost offended by the lack of attention, but squashed the unusual feeling under the logical conclusion that the less people noticed him, the easier his mission would be. He checked his phone again, looking down at a map of the store with a blue line indicating the path he should take to the first store.

When he reached the front of the store, he looked up at the store's name and sighed. Victoria's Secret didn't sound very promising, and the fact two teenage males were looking at him wide eyed as he entered didn't help.

"Dude, can you believe he did that?" one of them whispered.

"Oh man, he's whipped, I'd never let my girlfriend push me into going into one of those places," the other whispered back.

Despite the fact they were whispering, Daniel heard every word, and

internally groaned. He was enjoying the fact no one was looking at him, but now it seemed assured that no matter what he did in this store, everyone would notice him.

Snapping out of his self pity he looked down at his phone, checking the list of supplies he would need to pick up. Bras, panties, various feminine hygiene products and— well that's unexpected. Catherine B320 had put in a request for a, — thong. Blue eyes narrowed as Six pictured the female Spartan in a red lacy thong. Daniel could feel his heart beat faster, his face flushed, and his new pants seemed a little tight.

He shook his head, dismissing the thoughts and wondering where that reaction had come from. Sure by any standards Kat was a good looking woman, but that sort of thing had never mattered to Six, or any of the members of Noble Team before. Though, if Daniel thought about it, this was probably the first time since he had first been conscripted that he had time to think about anything but his mission.

Noble Six walked up to a rack of women's undergarments, expecting to simply select the appropriate sizes, grab two of each, and move on, but was overwhelmed by the selections available. Different colors, different designs, different materials, anything that could be different from one to another, was.

The pale Spartan stared at the rack for nearly thirty seconds before young redhead came up to him, "Can I help you sir?"

"Uh, yeah," he said, "I think I need some help."

"Well I'm impressed, I don't know how she got you down here, but your girlfriend must be one tough lady."

"My what?" Six said, turning to her with a confused look.

"Your girlfriend? Unless she's your wife, but—" the freckled girl looked down at his left hand, "I don't see a ring."

"Oh, a girlfriend," Daniel muttered, "I don't have one, or a wife. I'm just here picking up some items for a couple of women from my old unit."

At the mention of the Spartan's lack of girlfriend, the young redhead brightened up considerably, "Really," Six backed up a little at her predatory smile, "well, I could help you make a suggestion. Maybe model a few for you?"

Daniel was fairly confident that the freckled woman was about thirty seconds away from doing something drastic, "Well— I just need two of each of these sizes."

He showed her the list displayed on her phone, which she immediately took from his hands, taking the time to look at them, "You know what they say about men with big hands, and your hands have to be the biggest I've ever seen."

Six's face flushed, before snatching his phone back from the redhead and grabbing two of each size he needed. Each one he grabbed was out of something called the Mary Jane Watson collection, which apparently met the approval of the young woman if the hum of acknowledgement was

anything to go by.

"Nice choice, I've always found those the most comfortable," she said, before turning back, "and really easy to take offâ€|"

Continuing to blush, Daniel held up what he had, "I think I have everything I need, I'll just check out and leave."

"Sure thing," she continued, predatory smile never faltering. Six was getting the distinct impression that this must be how the Moa felt on Reach when it was being stalked by a pack of Silver Backed Raptors. The predatory birds, each approximately six feet in length bore an incredible resemblance to the extinct Earth animal Velociraptor, except for the silver feathers running down the male's backs. They also loved moa, usually hunting the flightless birds down in packs, and sometimes even consolidating packs to kill Guta.

The young woman typed away at the register, scanned the packages of women's underwear, and looked back up at him, eyes flashing dangerously at him, "That'll be one hundred and seventy six dollars and thirty eight cents, handsome."

Throwing down two one hundred dollar bills, Daniel picked up the bag the redhead had put the articles in. Doing everything within his power to not meet her gaze, Six took the receipt and his change and never looked back as he left the store. He put the cash in his pocket and looked down at his receipt, looking at the price of each item, but was drawn to something on the back of the piece of paper. He flipped it over and found ten digits scrawled on there, forming what he had come to recognize as a phone number, no doubt the freckled girl's number.

"Something interesting there, Daniel?" an accented voice interrupted his thoughts.

The Lieutenant looked up to see the tattooed visage of Noble Three standing there holding multiple bags that bulged with clothing. Each bag must have weighed several pounds, yet the Spartan's incredibly strong hands held them with ease, drawing looks from passerby's.

"She's incorrigible."

Jun tilted his head, "Who?"

Six jerked his head back towards the store he had just left where a young, freckled redhead was leaning over the counter staring wistfully at the pale Spartan's back.

Jun looked back to Daniel, "What'd she do?"

"Nothing, lets go."

The bald Spartan just raised an eyebrow as he walked behind his superior officer towards the exit, "Well did you get everything you needed?"

"Not exactly, but I'll be damned if I'm going back in there, maybe if the clerk were to be replaced by a rampaging brute, I'd at least feel

safe then."

Jun peered at the receipt still in Daniel's hand, "Oh I don't know, I thoughtâ€| Jenna, was cute. You should definitely call her back."

Six scowled and moved a little faster, leaving the mall at what most would consider a jog, though with his long strides, it only looked like a quick walk. Jun tossed the clothing into the truck's backseat before climbing in with them, taking Daniel's bag as well.

"Call Emile, ask if he's nearly done, and tell him we'll be there shortly."

Jun just smirked at the Lieutenant's attitude, still clearly disturbed by what the woman in the store had done to him, and pulled out his phone while inserting the Bluetooth device into his ear, "Emileâ€| yeah it's Jun. How far along are you?... That's a lot of foodâ€| Yeah we've been getting stares from people all day longâ€| Hot Pockets? Sounds interestingâ€| Well we'll be there soon, Three out."

"Well?"

"He says he's checking out now, and he's got three carts full of food, however big a cart is, though Emile assures me it is a lot of food."

"It may not be enough if everyone on board has an appetite similar to ours a few hours ago," Six pointed out.

Jun chuckled, "Copy that, Six."

The tan truck pulled up next to the automatic glass doors of the grocery store just as they slid open to reveal a massive dark skinned man, and two young men, all three of them pushing carts filled with plastic bags.

Six rolled down the window just in time to hear Emile directing the two young men, "Yeah just throw em in the back there, I'm sure they'll be fine."

"Get everything, Emile?"

"Sure did, even the stuff Dot told me you didn't get. Something about a redhead?"

Daniel immediately began rolling the window back up, "Just hurry up and let's go, I'm sure they're waiting for us back home."

"Oh no," Jun said, leaning forward between the two front seats, "We still have one last piece of business."

Six looked over his shoulder at the Spartan, about to ask what business they had left here on the surface when Jun held out a check made out for one Jun Smith for twelve thousand dollars, and instead chose a different line of conversation, "I can't believe you told him your name was 'Smith' and I can hardly believe they believed you."

"I'll have to pick a new one, I'm sure, but as far as cashing this baby in, the Smith name'll work just fine."

Emile hopped into the passenger seat, "What's this about the Smith name?"

"Jun was just lamenting his choice of surname," Six explained.

Four nodded, "Smith was a dumb choice, can't believe they didn't see right through it, but I suppose if it'll work on the sleezebags from that bar, it'll probably work on the sleezebags at the bank."

"Well that's our last stop before heading back to the Vengeance."

"Well I didn't buy anything refrigerated, so we probably have a few hours before we have to get them back to the ship," Emile explained.

"I thought you bought a bunch of frozen pizzas and something called Hot Pockets?" Jun asked as he leaned back into the back seat.

"Yeah, but that shit's so full of preservatives MRE's would have a hell of a time keeping up."

Daniel's brow furrowed as he swiped through the GPS, finding a bank that was on their way out of the city, "The idea was that we wouldn't have to eat MRE's anymore."

"Well I saw a little kid buggin his mom, tryin to get her to buy a frozen pizza, so I'd have to imagine they're better than ration packs," Emile explained.

The truck made a left turn onto a busy street and started towards a bank located on the bottom floor of a thirty story building.

"Well I hope that kid has good taste," Jun said from his spot in the back seat.

"Here it is," Six said as he parked across the street from the bank, "Lets just get in, cash the check, and get out, understood?"

"And remember to use the crosswalk!" Jun chirped.

"Why?" Daniel asked.

"Cause that's the only legal way to cross the street."

Emile turned to look at the bald man, "Dudeâ€¦ we stole this truck."

"Did you just say 'dude'?" Jun asked.

"Heard some kid say it in the store earlier, apparently it is a way express a certain amount of surprise, or bewildermentâ€¦" Emile paused, "I think?"

Blue eyes met brown eyes, before turning back to green ones, "Let's go."

The three soon stood inside the lobby of the bank, each of them checking out the ritzy atmosphere. The floor was glossed marble that jutted up in various places to form marble columns. The ceiling was gold colored and formed various patterns, fitting in with the furniture lining the spacious room. Various men and women bustled through the lobby and through various nearby hallways. Most of the people present were wearing business suits, though there were a few in one line wearing casual clothing.

"Jun, go cash your check, Emile and I are gonna have a look around," Daniel ordered.

The bald Spartan just nodded and stepped into line, and only received one wide eyed stare, from a young teenager in a grey hoody and a pair of headphones wrapped around his neck, everyone else seemed determine not to notice anyone around them, as though looking at each other inside this building was taboo.

Six and Four walked over to a pair of elevators, just leaning against the wall, and doing essentially what they had been doing all day, observing those around them. Of course not many people chose to speak of truly relevant things in public, things Spartans would like to know like any possible encounters with aliens, the skills and abilities of the multiple superhumans, or even recent advancements in military technology. But all three of them knew that when they were sent on the scouting mission, and that sort of information wasn't really the goal of the mission. The goal, instead, was to learn about the culture here, to see if they could fit in, or at the very least, remain relatively unnoticed.

The people of New York seemed to be accustomed to the various differences people might have, and most chose not to give the Spartan's more than a quick glance. Some people stared, though that was usually in situations where their imposing size made itself quite obvious, such as Jun towering over the scrawny teenager.

"LT," Emile whispered as he caught sight of a figure near the door.

The dark skinned Spartan looked away, making it far less conspicuous for Six to look towards the door, where he immediately took notice of what Emile was talking about.

They entered in at a trickle, each dressed in baggy clothing, and each walking with a weight unnoticeable by most pedestrians. By the time Daniel turned his attention away from the group of men, lest he be spotted for his interest, he had been able to distinguish eight of them.

Jun left the line, pocketing a large sum of money, and turned to make his way back to his fellow Spartan's when he too caught sight of the group. The sniper's eyes picked two particular targets, ones that the others kept their distance from, these were the captains of the raid, and perhaps something more. One of them was wearing a hood over his head, keeping his face in shadow, but Three easily picked out the mask the man was wearing.

The marksman stepped up to the other two, "Two potential superhumans, and at least twelve armed gunman."

The demo-expert of the group took another glance before leaning back and feigning boredom, "Make that fifteen armed gunman, two potential superhumans, and one definite superhuman."

Six glanced out of the corner of his eye, spotting the one Emile had pointed out as a 'definite superhuman' immediately. At nearly seven and a half feet, the man towered over everyone near him, and would tower over the Spartans, and each step he made could be felt by the super soldiers' trained senses, meaning he was unusually heavy. Then there was the trench coat that could barely cover him, sliding apart in some places to reveal tough grey material underneath, and a five gallon hat that should never have fooled anyone rested atop his horned head.

"Might I suggest we take a bathroom break before hitting the road?" Jun asked politely. The other two nodded, and casually walked around the corner towards the men's restroom, which was thankfully empty.

As soon as they confirmed they were alone, Emile turned back, "What the hell are we going to do about this?"

"Nothing," Jun said, "This has nothing to do with us, we should leave through the back door before this begins."

Emile didn't like that answer, "Nothing to do with us? Those people out there might die, and we could prevent that! Isn't it our mission to protect humanity, whatever the cost?"

"Our humanity, I never signed up to protect two Earths," Jun shot back, "besides, three of those people back there are unknowns. We have no idea if guns can even hurt those guys."

Six looked back and forth between his two arguing subordinates. On one side was Jun, Noble Three, and perhaps the deadliest marksman alive. On the surface the man was friendly, chatty, and even a little annoying, but when it came to combat, the man lost any sense of emotion. His file was filled with warnings of dangerous emotional disconnect from his actions, but based on what Daniel had been able to figure out about the man, emotionally disconnecting himself from the mission was a survival technique. Jun never worried about the consequences of his actions because he could never deal with killing on the scale of war the same way Emile could.

Which brought the pale Spartan to the other side. Emile is a battle happy warrior, gung-ho in the middle of combat, but quiet, almost completely silent outside of a mission. This was a man who was in almost every way, the polar opposite of Jun. Where Three liked sniper rifles, Four loved shotguns. When Jun would laugh, Emile would stay silent. And when the sniper disconnected himself from his actions, the skull clad warrior would let his emotions drive his decisions.

Gunshots rang out from the lobby, followed by men and women screaming. Deep voiced shouting ensued, yelling for everyone to get down on the ground. The three Spartans could hear rapid footsteps, someone was running, but they were cut short by the sharp staccato of a nine millimeter fully automatic pistol and the thump of a dead body falling to the floor just outside the bathroom.

"Whatever we do, we need to do it, now!" Jun hissed.

Six let the world fade, centering his thoughts on everything he had seen, the layout of the building, the different details of the building from inside and out, the various people he had seen, the faces of each gunman he had seen before leaving.

Daniel reached into his pocket and thumbed his Bluetooth on as he slid it into his ear, "Commander, are you there?"

"Affirmative, Six, what's your situation?"

"We're in a hostile situation, but currently incognito. We're holed up in a bank on the north side of the city, approximately twenty armed gunman, one superhuman, and two potential superhumans."

"Affirmative, Six," Carter replied, "Dot, zero in on their location, Kat, get me eyes on."

The muffled replies of the others could be heard through the open comm. link Six had established just as Emile and Jun slide their earpieces in.

"I see what you were talking about, we've got thirteen gunmen in the lobby, and I think I see two of your superhumans. A big grey guy, looks kind of like a rhino?"

"That's one of them," Jun said as he stacked up behind Emile who was peeking out of the bathroom door down the hall.

"That's Aleksei Sytsevich, aka Rhino. Based on the dossier assembled by Dot in the limited time allotted, he has incredible strength, akin to a rampaging hunter. He tends to charge his enemies, but can easily be dodged, and he isn't very smart. He's fairly quick, at least when he's charging, but not nearly as fast as one of us on a dead sprint."

"Lieutenant!" Emile whispered, jerking his head towards the door, "We've got four gunmen armed with submachine guns and assault rifles headed this way."

"Stack up!" Six whispered harshly, "Commander, what about the other superhuman in the lobby?"

"The other is Peter Petruski, aka Trapster. Technically not superhuman, but he does employ a number of unique non-lethal weapons that could prove to be troublesome if you get hit. They appear to be some sort of incredibly quick setting glue fired from a pistol, or from a grenade."

"I see him," Emile whispered as he peeked out of the door, "He's wearing two bandoliers over each shoulder, both of em full of those sticky nades."

"One shot to one of those ought to leave him in a bind," Jun said.

"Three, if you ever say anything like that again, I will kill you, have Kat resurrect you. While she's resurrecting you, I will take

classes to learn how to cook so when your alive again I can cut off your balls, bake them into a nice chocolate sufllet with cream cheese topping, feed them to you in said sufllet, then kill you again," Four threatened softly, "Understood?"

Jun didn't respond, so Six took the opportunity to ask him something, "I thought you were against interfering?"

"I am," he responded calmly, "It's not our problem, but if we're going to get out of here, we need to go through this group, and we need to do it efficiently."

Emile snorted quietly, "These people need our help!"

"Records show a local superhuman known as Spider-Man usually deals with these scenarios," Carter said, "Though based on what we're seeing up here, any attempt to get in will result in the deaths of the hostages."

"What about coming from the inside?"

"If you can get the surprise on them, Six, then you'll easily take out the gunmen before they get a chance to kill any hostages, though I am showing three more gunmen moving through the back of the bank, each with hostages, and another super criminal."

"How many of these guys are there?" Emile asked rhetorically, though he did get an answer from Jun.

"Three, apparently"

"Jun, shut the fuck up."

"Why ask if you didn't want an answer?"

"I will fucking bleed you out through your abdominal aorta, keep you alive through all of it, then replace your blood with sulfuric acid"

"Lock it down," Six whispered harshly, "Commander, what are your thoughts on the situation? Any orders as to what we should do?"

There was a pause, "I'm not on the ground, Lieutenant, this is up to you. What do you think?"

"

"Emile, draw one of the gunman's attention, we'll commandeer his weapons, and execute the others in the hall, then we'll get out of here."

"This is a mistake, Six," Four warned.

"No, he's keeping the mission at the front of his mind," Jun rebuked, "not his conscience, something you could use more practice in."

Emile silently snarled as he moved to the side of the door and waited for the other two to move into the stalls where they'd be hidden from

anyone entering. He knocked on the door ever so slightly, and quickly grabbed someone's attention.

"Murphy!" a scratchy voice called out, "Go check out the bathrooms!"

"Sure," a voice that was almost uncomfortably close responded.

From this distance, Emile could easily hear the heavy footsteps approach across the tile floor. The door swung open, the actual door part obstructing the gunman's view from the green eyed Spartan on the other side. The man stepped through fully, allowing the door to close and Emile to strike.

Contrary to most action movies, there was no noise, very little movement, and it was over in one strike. Emile's fist contacted the back of the man's skull and shattered it, sending fragments of bone slicing through the brain matter, dropping the man like a sack of potatoes, but not before the Spartan could slip the assault rifle from his hands so it wouldn't clatter on the ground.

Jun and Daniel moved over from the stalls, Jun leaning down and stripping the dead man of his weapons and ammunition. Three quickly pulled a submachine gun from a sling around the man's waist. None of the Spartan's recognized the model, but that was understandable considering the fact that by their standards the weapon was over four hundred years old. That said, the weapon did resemble an M7 submachine gun, but the ammunition was slotted inside the pistol grip and the stock seemed able to retract and extend.

"Trade you," Jun said as he held up the submachine gun up to Emile, knowing that the vicious Spartan wouldn't pass up on a close quarters weapon.

Jun stood up and looked down the ACOG sight attached to the weapon, getting used to the red reticule in the center of the scope, then shifted his attention to the grenade launcher attached to the bottom of the weapon, admiring the seamless way it seemed to attach into the rail and how it felt similar to an MA37 in weight, but more like a BR55 in the way it handled. He ejected the clip, taking a look at the ammunition, and frowned. 5.56 millimeter rounds, not nearly the same firepower as a 7.62, and the stock seemed a little clumsy to him, but this rifle would undoubtedly work well in the master marksman's hands.

Emile strapped the holster from the dead man's thigh onto his own and fit his new SMG there. Jun slung the strap of the assault rifle over his shoulder and held it diagonally across his chest, barrel pointed downwards. Six pulled his M6 SOCOM from his shoulder holster and stepped up to the door.

"Don't use your new weapons yet," Daniel warned, "We need to do this quietly, use those only if we need the added firepower. Jun," he grabbed the sniper's attention, "Emile and I will clear the hallway of gunmen, two to the chest one to the head. I want you to take care of Petruski, one to the bandolier."

Emile looked down at the dead man on the floor and plucked a bandana from the man's back pocket, "We should probably cover our face, make sure no one gets a clear ID on us."

The Spartan wrapped the cloth around his head, just above the nose, revealing only the upper half of his head. Jun nodded and reached down, snatching the black scarf that no doubt served as a dust mask should the robbers have to use explosives and wrapped the cloth around his head, covering himself from neck to bald scalp leaving only his eyes exposed. Six simply reached down and pulled the ski mask off the dead man's head, which was surprisingly clean considering the open wound on the back of the man's skull, and slid it on.

Two nods in confirmation and Six stood in front of the door, hand up and ready to breach when a voice cut through the quiet hallway, "Murphy! You done in there?"

The gunman received his answer in the form of three 12.7 millimeter rounds. One penetrated the body armor over his left lung with ease, another cored the man's heart, and the final one exploded out the back of the man's head. Another man dropped to the floor, having never had the chance to turn around at the sound of his comrade's body hitting the floor.

Emile moved next, fluidly entering a firing stance to the Lieutenant's left and easily picking off the two armed men who were just turning with one to the left lung, one to the heart, and one in the head, leaving a clear path for the final Spartan to put a shot on a very surprised Peter Petruski at the far end of the hallway, past the turn off for the lobby.

The bald Spartan squeezed the trigger, the internal pin struck the primer, sparking the gunpowder and launching a 12.7 millimeter down the barrel at supersonic speeds. Normally the shot would echo through the building as though someone had smashed two cast iron frying pans together, but as the high explosive round left the barrel it passed through a chamber that bled off the gasses that had been accelerating it and absorbed the shockwave of the sonic boom.

In short, the round travelling at over four hundred and fifty meters per second left the pistol with only the slightest click of the slide moving to chamber another round, and shot forth into the rising hand of Trapster, easily penetrating the metallic glue gun in his hand. The round crumpled as it passed through the first metal layer, slid through the glue inside the weapon, and exploded when it hit the other end. In less than a millisecond, Petruski's weapon exploded, showering him with his own specialized glue which hardened as soon as it made contact. The hose connected to the gun continued to spray, making Trapster's situation worse by the second. Soon, the criminal's entire body was covered in hardened glue, leaving only the man's face exposed.

Jun raised an eyebrow, looked to the other two, and said, "That's it?"

"HELP!" Trapster suddenly shouted from his spot stuck inside the glue, "HELP!"

"I fucking hate you," Emile said quietly, "I really, fucking, hate you."

The comm. line crackled, "Heads up Spartans, tangeros headed your

way!"

"We should go," Jun warned, "Now."

"Fuck that! Those hostages are as good as dead if we don't do something!"

"The LT's made up his mind, Four."

Six ended the argument between his two subordinates, "Your right, I have. Move up and engage."

Jun sighed, "Yes sir," and pulled up his new assault rifle just as Emile shed his jacket and pulled out his submachine gun.

Heavy footsteps announced the arrival of the hostiles, being led by a massive grey, horned, monster of a man, "What the hell is going on here?!"

"Thisâ€¦!"

BOOM!

Jun pushed the slide on the forty millimeter grenade launcher forward, letting the spent shell drop, and slapped another one in. Six slid forward, grabbing the assault rifle from the dead mercenary on the ground, and raised the matte black weapon up to his shoulder and found one of the four gunmen in his holographic sight. A sharp burst dropped the man, and another burst dropped another one, and another.

While Jun and Daniel took care of the mercenaries, Emile charged the soot covered Rhino.

"I'll crush you like a bug!"

Emile's only response was to fire his SMG in one hand, and his SOCOM in the other, peppering the giant grey armor of Aleksei Sytsevich with lead. None of the rounds were able to penetrate the incredibly strong armor, but each one felt like an adult punching him with all their strength, which only served to enhance the brute's rage.

The armored titan and the enhanced super soldier were only fifteen feet apart when Rhino lowered his head, intent on piercing the Spartan with his horns, and leapt the last of the gap. Unfortunately for the former mobster, Emile was far too quick for the blow to ever land, and slid underneath the behemoth in midair and lashed out with his left foot, kicking Rhino's right leg out from its position, meaning the monster had only one foot to land on, and for a fifteen hundred pound behemoth, that was quite difficult.

Aleksei slammed into the ground, face first, and rolled into a marble column, smashing it with his tremendous bulk.

"Three, you and I will rescue the hostages and take care of the last super criminal," Daniel ordered as he rose to his feet, "Four, I want this guy dead!"

"Copy that, Six!" Emile said as he stripped another dead merc of his SMG and raising next to his other one. The shots rang out

simultaneously, creating a maelstrom of lead striking Sytsevich.

Rhino shook the debris off of him, stumbling to his feet as he felt the nine millimeter rounds pepper his hide like armor. Grabbing a piece of the rubble, the behemoth turned and threw it at the source of the bullets.

Emile easily sidestepped the chunk of marble, all the while keeping the two barrels pointed directly at the beast, watching the bullets impact the armor only to bounce off as the monster turned towards him, and lowered his head.

"RAAAAGH!"

Emile was no where near as strong as the Russian mobster, but he was easily strong enough to lift him, especially when so much of his weight was shifted forwards. Noble Four planted both palms against the criminal's torso and heaved, throwing the massive man down the hall where he slammed into a water fountain, ripping the metal casing off and spraying the hallway with water.

"Your really starting to piss me off!"

Rhino closed the gap, choosing to go for a haymaker rather than his usual charge, which Emile simply ducked, dropped both submachine guns, and pulled out his kukri from his beltline. Truthfully, Four had no idea if the monomolecular knife would penetrate the armor, considering armor piercing high explosive rounds couldn't do it, but despite his worries, the knife dug in, slicing through the hide like armor and piercing the skin underneath.

"You made me, the Rhino, bleed!" Aleksei screamed out in rage, "I'll kill you!"

Emile's comm. piece crackled to life as he ducked under a swing, "Does he ever shut up? We can hear him from here."

â€|

Six backhanded a merc that had tried to flank him by sneaking around the counter, and broke his neck, sending the lifeless body flying off into a nearby marble wall. Daniel focused back on his rifle, laying down suppressing fire as Jun continued to pick off the mercenaries.

"Your hardly one to talk, Three," the Lieutenant chided as he placed a two round burst into the head of yet another gunman. The mercenaries were well outfitted, each carrying military firearms, assault rifles, submachine guns, grenade launchers, and body armor, thick body armor. That's why both Noble Six and Three were using headshots, double tapping just to make sure, and also why none of the criminals were recognizable.

"Just saying, Four could keep it down over there," the sniper replied as he placed one shot in each eye of a mercenary who attempted to use a middle aged woman in a business suit as a human shield. The woman collapsed to the floor in sobbing heap next to an old man as the merc fell backwards, missing the back half of his skull.

"Got two tangos, making a break for the doors," Jun spoke up, "permission to engage?"

"Kill them," Daniel confirmed. Four shots rang out and the glass doors were sprayed with blood, "Lets move towards the vault, the Commander said the last of them were headed in that direction."

"Do we know who the last superhuman was?"

"No, but Iâ€|"

The Lieutenant was cut off by a loud crash and a roar of rage and pain. Rhino, with Emile riding on his back, had just run into a solid wall that cut the rest of the hallway off from the lobby, and was stumbling into the spacious room, but that wasn't the source of the pain in Aleksei's voice. The pain was no doubt coming from the twelve inch titanium kukri that was buried in his right shoulder.

"Scratch that last order, Three," Six yelled over the thrashing of Rhino, "Get the civvies out of here, I'll deal with the rest of the mercs!"

"Copy that, LT!" Jun replied as he fired rounds into the chest of the armored behemoth, "Lets Go! Get out of here! Come ON!"

Sytsevich charged another wall, intent on knocking the super soldier clinging to his back off, but before the man's long horns made contact with the wall, Emile leapt from the monster's back in a backflip, and landed behind the counter.

Rhino turned around from the wall he had just smashed and looked for his enemy amongst the fleeing people, only to find a cash register slam into his face from across the lobby.

He roared again in anger, and prepared to charge, but the devastating kukri cut through his hide like armor and dug deep into his pectoral muscle followed by a four hundred pound super soldier slamming into him knocking him back against the wall where he was subjected to more vicious cuts and stabs from the deadly blade and its ruthless wielder.

Finally, Rhino landed his first hit of the fight, managing to grab hold of Emile and toss him across the room. Any normal human being, hell, anyone other than a Spartan probably would have been crushed by the force of being slammed into a marble pillar, but Noble Four simply twisted in midair and planted both feet against the pillar, and launched right back at the beast of a man.

"ACK!" Aleksei was shoved back into the wall and felt the blade dig into his collar bone. Gritting his teeth, Sytsevich managed to grab a hold of the Spartan, but instead of flinging him away like last time, Rhino grabbed one of the super soldier's legs and slammed him into the ground.

Emile felt pain bloom along his back, his leg that had been grabbed, and his head as his body shattered the thin layer of marble lining the floor, the wind blasted from his lungs, and his vision danced with stars. Thankfully, bones lined with tungsten carbide didn't break so easily, nor did muscle more than twice as dense and far thicker than most human beings did not bruise or tear under the

stress. But all of those enhancements would be of little use as Rhino lifted his foot, ready to crush the Spartan.

Thankfully, Emile was not alone in his fight, as forty millimeter grenade slammed into the Russian mobster's chest, shoving him back yet again into the wall.

Four leapt to his feet and rolled to the side as Rhino came back and slammed his fist into the ground where Emile had been. 5.56 rounds peppered his damaged armor, further enraging the monster.

"Your all gonna pay for this!" Aleksei shouted as Jun slapped another magazine into his rifle, "This was all set! Spider-Man would come, he would get all of those people killed! It was going to break him! And you've RUINED IT!"

Rhino charged the Spartan standing in front of the bank's doors, intent on smashing the new nuisance like a bug. Just before he reached the soldier, however, the Spartan he had thought was down made his presence known.

Emile grabbed the kukri still stuck in the flesh just above Rhino's collar bone, and pulled. The blade cut through the thick armor as though it was simply paper, and left a great red trail across the beastly man's neck.

Jun rolled to the side and Emile simply dropped from the huge criminal's back as the massive man took his final steps at full speed. The man's massive bulk easily smashed through the glass doors and his momentum carried him out onto the sidewalk which was currently being cleared by police officers who had only just arrived.

Three steps was all the further Rhino made it before dropping to the cement and sliding along the ground where he finally came to a rest in the middle of the street where a pool of blood formed around him.

Jun cocked his head, "That was easy."

Emile glared at the marksman who immediately held his hands up in surrender, "I know, I know, I'll shut up."

Three gunshots grabbed the two Spartans' attention. The shots echoed through the lobby, but both super soldiers could tell where they were coming from.

"C'mon Three, let's go get the LT and get the hell out of here."

â€|

Herman Schultz, aka Shocker, swung the vault door wide open after he had used his specialized gauntlets to shatter the internal locking mechanisms. He pushed the three mercs into the vault, each one carrying two duffle bags capable of holding hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Lets hurry it up, from the sounds outside I'd guess that Spider-Man has made his move," Shocker told the henchmen before turning back to

the last gunman who was pointing his twelve gauge sawed off shotgun at a group of four people, "Get two of them ready to move, we'll be leaving s-â€|"

The mercenary's head warped under the force of two hollow point rounds. The man dropped to the ground like a sack of potatoes next to the four hostages and was surrounded in a pool of his own grey matter and blood.

Schultz looked up from the body to the door way to see massive man holding a smoking barrel, "Surrender, or don't, but your friends tried that last option and I believe they're all dead."

Shocker was stunned for a second, but soon aimed one of his deadly vibrating gauntlets at the man and fired a concentrated blast of sonic vibrations at the super soldier. The wave of deadly vibrations was barely visible, warping the air similar to the way heat waves on pavement create visible phenomena, but it was far slower than a bullet. Still, the fact the shockwave never hit the Spartan was nearly inconceivable.

The rifle raised to find Schultz in the holographic sight, and let loose a burst. The bullets traveled at super sonic speeds, ready to tear through flesh and bone, only to smash into a condensed layer of air.

Herman watched the hollow point rounds burst as they hit the sonic shield his gauntlets produced. The bullets crumpled and lost their kinetic energy, sending warped pieces of lead pelting Schultz with energy akin to an airsoft gun, which his suit easily protected him from.

Six kept firing, hoping to break through the sonic barrier, but the rifle's magazine ran out before that happened. The Spartan tossed the rifle butt first at the criminal, but the gun was caught by a sonic wave where it was crushed under the extreme pressure.

Schultz kept his distance from his physically superior opponent, aware that he now had the advantage, and continued firing sonic blasts. Unfortunately for the criminal, none of the blasts ever managed to find their mark as the super soldier continued to duck and weave between the shockwaves.

Six continued to throw random objects at the career criminal, in hopes one would land or distract him long enough for the Spartan to get close and finish him off. The situation took a dire turn for the worse when the three mercenaries who had been loading up cash in duffle bags made an appearance.

The first mercenary exited the vault holding a nine millimeter handgun, and attempted to find the soldier. What he found was a massive pale hand wrapping around his wrists, snapping the bones and wrenching the weapon from his hands. Six pulled the handgun up and fired two rounds into each of the man's eyes and leapt to the side as Shocker sent a sonic blast into the vault, hoping to kill the Spartan.

Instead of killing the soldier, however, the blast hit the two surviving mercenaries, liquefying their internal organs and crushing their bones.

Schultz recoiled from the sight of the liquefied human beings slosh down onto the floor, a crucial mistake, and one Daniel took immediate advantage of.

A pale fist swung in towards Shocker's head, connecting with the criminal's skull just above his left eye, but the material making the suit was too thick, and too strong for one punch to be a killing blow. As Schultz lay on the floor, dazed and undoubtedly hurting, Six grabbed a the twelve gauge shotgun from the body near where the hostages were still sitting, pointed it down, and pulled the trigger, shredding Shocker's right lung, pump and pull, Shocker's heart was a bloody pulp, pump and one final pull, the man's head disappeared in a bloody explosion.

"You killed all of them," one of the hostages, a young woman, said in disbelief.

Six turned his blue eyes towards the hostages in curiosity, "So?"

"What kind of hero kills?" she asked, much to the Spartan's confusion.

Six turned away from the hostages and leaned down to turn over the man who's wrists he had snapped and began stripping the body of ammunition and grenades, just in case. He pulled a few magazines for the man's assault rifle and stuffed them into the inner pockets of his jacket as he pulled the sand colored rifle up, letting the strap hang freely. He looked down the rail of the weapon, checking the iron sights for any flaws or damage, then moved the foregrip to a comfortable position, and finally slid the clip from its spot and thumbed down on the top bullet, checking to see how many rounds were currently in the magazine.

As he slammed the full magazine back into the rifle, Six could hear the soft footfalls of experienced infiltrators approaching, "Three, Four, we're clear in here."

Despite the Lieutenant's assurances that the room was clear of hostiles, Emile still entered holding two submachine guns up and ready to fire, sweeping the right side of the room, while Jun came next, holding his rifle steady as he swept the left side of the room, scanning the hostages, but ultimately deciding against painting the room with their brains.

Emile exited the vault after performing a sweep and walked up to Schultz's body, "Damn LT, overkill much?"

Jun looked at the body, "What? Two to the chest, one to the head."

"That generally doesn't apply to buckshot," Four shot back.

"Enough chatter," Six ordered before turning to the civilians, "Get out of here, I assume all hostiles are down?"

Jun nodded, "All tangos have been eliminated and all noncombatants have been evacuated from this floorâ€¦ except for these ones of course."

"Good," Daniel nodded as he watched the civilians rush out of the room, apparently in a hurry to be away from the dangerous men. He then turned his attention to a ruffled Emile, "Status, Four?"

"Green, sir," Emile replied without any hesitation.

His green shirt was torn in some places, and just a little bit of blood leaked through a few open cuts, and there were a few bruises forming along his face from when he was riding Rhino like a bucking bronco, but other than those superficial scrapes, he wasn't displaying any serious injury.

Jun tilted his head, "Sounds like the police have fully surrounded the building, we should go."

"This time," Emile said, "I got no objections."

The three walked out into the lobby, all the while Six was formulating an escape plan, "We'll head up to the roof, and split up, make your way across the rooftops until your positive no one will notice you and then we'll meet back at the truck."

"Hopefully no one decides to steal our stuff," Jun pointed out.

Emile suddenly thrust his hand out, stopping the other two and forcing them down behind cover, "We've got unknowns in the lobby!"

!"

Approximately twenty minutes ago a red and blue figure was swinging through New York's skyscrapers. The colorful figure displayed impressive acrobatic skills as he swung from building to building on what appeared to be thick spider webbing.

Peter Parker let himself relax as he swung past Times Square, passing barely ten feet above the taxis and cars below, and soared through the air far above the roofs of the buildings below, and finally shot a piece of web into a nearby construction crane keeping the wall crawler from smashing into the pavement.

Movement out of the corner of his eye caught the super powered twenty something's attention. A streak of fire across the sky was approaching, rapidly. Normally a fireball following an erratic pattern before setting a course directly for one's self would be cause for worry, but Peter was surprisingly unconcerned.

"Hey Johnny!"

The fireball pulled up next to the wall crawler and flew along next to him as he swung through the New York buildings, "Hey Pete! Where ya headed?"

"Oh I was just thinking of swinging over to the Empire State building, maybe just hanging out for a while," Spider-Man answered Johnny Storm, aka the Human Torch.

The man on fire nodded as he flew through the streets of Manhattan, "It does seem quiet today," he trailed off and a sly look came over his burning face, "Will Carol be meeting you there?"

Peter nearly missed his next mark, "Uh, what?"

"You knowâ€|" Johnny smirked, "Ms. Marvel? You two have been hanging out quite a bit ever since you and Mary Jane decided to break it off."

"Nonsense," Spider-Man said, "It's a rough time, and she's a valued friend."

"I didn't say she was anything else," the Human Torch pointed out.

The wall crawler paused, "That's gotta be the first time you outsmarted anyone."

"So I'm right?"

"Shut up."

Suddenly the noise of police sirens caught their attention down below. A line of fifteen police vehicles made a violent right turn down onto a busy four lane street and accelerated dangerously.

Spider-Man sighed, "So much for a peaceful dayâ€|"

"A day you could have spent with _Carol_!" Storm said with a special emphasis on the heroine's name.

"Shut up and let's go!"

The two followed the police cars to bank at the base of thirty story building that stood only a few stories taller than those around it. The police had already sectioned off the side of the building the bank was located, and were working to section off the others, to completely surround the building.

"Another bank robbery?" Storm asked, "On a Sunday? These guys have no class!"

"No kidding! Don't they know I was planning on eating a nice Sunday supper with Aunt May?"

"Was Danvers going to be there?"

"Oh stop already- WHOA!"

Spider-Man was cut off in the middle of his friendly chiding as the glass doors leading to the bank exploded, and a familiar form stumbled out.

"Rhino!" Peter shouted, and raised his hand from his perch to fire a web off at the super criminal, but was stopped by his friend.

"Dude, wait," the Fantastic Four member said, "Lookâ€|"

Rhino barely made it past the sidewalk and anyone looking on could see that something was seriously wrong with the former mobster. A trail of red followed the massive man as he continued to take slower and increasingly unsteady steps until he finally fell, crushing the asphalt below him and digging a channel in the street with his momentum. As the red liquid continued to form a pool around the beast of a man, the two heroes finally realized what it was.

"Holy shit," Storm breathed, "is he?"

Spider-Man shook his head, "I don't know, but I plan on finding out!"

Swinging down to the massive man, Peter dropped to his feet with unnatural grace and stepped closer to the motionless body. Aleksei wasn't breathing, he wasn't twitching, and the pool of blood was growing and the blood was getting darker. There was no doubt in his mind that his former enemy was dead, and the thought chilled him to the bone.

Seeking some form of closure, Spider-Man turned the body over, and revealed a gruesome gash across the mobster's neck. Blood no longer poured out of the wound, likely because it was already all over the road.

"Whoa," a voice whispered from behind the arachnid powered hero, "What could have done that to the Rhino?"

"I-I don't know," Peter admitted, "Adamantium, vibranium, I suppose if you were to sharpen titanium down to a razor's edge it could cut through, but you'd have to be pretty strong to do it."

Three gunshots echoed from within the building, causing both heroes to snap their attention to the bank, and the gruesome spectacle within. Bodies were relatively undamaged, but almost every mercenaries' head was missing, or at least having massive holes ripped through them.

Loud retching from behind let Peter know that the Human Torch was just as disturbed by the sight before them as he was. There were footprints in the blood, but Spider-Man was no tracker. It was, however, that the majority of the footprints were leading out of the door and onto the street.

A tingling sensation traveled along the young man's head, a sixth sense he had come to trust. This Spider-Sense, as he called it, alerted him to danger before it happened, usually giving him enough time to react, but this attack was so fast, so incredibly, impossibly quick, that the tingling sensation triggered only twelve full milliseconds before two large open hands slapped both sides of his head.

The blow's effect was immediate as bells rung inside Peter's head and his vision filled with stars. As he stumbled after the very precise hit, he managed to see a large figure move up behind the still vomiting Torch and break a piece of wooden cabinet door over his head, knocking the hero to the floor. A deep, strong voice penetrated Spider-Man's world of haze and confusion, though the words were unintelligible.

Peter's vision and hearing began to return, and he saw two figures dash towards the elevators. He attempted to follow them, but stumbled to the ground in a dizzying rush. By the time he finally reached his feet with his full bearings, the elevator doors had shut, and the needle indicated they had already reached the twentieth floor. Behind him, Johnny also reached his feet, shook his head, and let out a single statement.

"Fuck that hurt!"

"They're headed towards the roof!" Spider-Man said, ignoring his comrade's pain, his own ears were still ringing and his vision was still hazy, "Come on, we have to stop them!"

"Flame On!" Johnny said as his body burst into flames, "Let's do this."

Both heroes shot out of the destroyed glass doors, the Human Torch bursting upwards in a trail of plasma, Spider-Man firing a thick strand of webbing up to roof of the building and launching himself upwards with a strong tug on the elastic string.

Neither bothered to stick around in the broken lobby as a third figure emerged from behind the wrecked counter. Blue eyes surrounded by a pale face looked around the empty room before the Spartan moved on, slipping through the building, out onto the street, and past the police line without being noticed. Soon a tall figure stepped into a large tan truck, asked the officers on the scene if he could go, and was soon driving away.

"Well that was easy," Six mumbled to himself before pushing his Bluetooth back in, "Three, Four, how's it going up there?"

â€|

Emile could normally push seventy kilometers per hour in his MJOLNIR, and even out of it he had been known to get up to fifty, but as his legs bent and sprung, the Spartan III Commando must have been close to sixty kilometers an hour, it certainly felt like it when he hit the roof of the adjacent building.

The fireball chasing him swerved, pulled alongside the incredibly fast Spartan, and yelled, "Stop where you are! Or don't, I really want to get some payback for the welt on my head!"

Four ripped a metal plate off of a nearby air-conditioning unit as he ran, and spun it like a frisbee at the man on fire.

"Whoa!" the Human Torch yelled as he narrowly dodged the spinning piece of metal, "That's it!"

Fireballs hit the ground around the Spartan as he weaved between the rooftop machinery, the pebbles that layered the rooftop melted and fused together as each ball of plasma hit them, leaving a trail of bubbling rock wherever Emile went.

"I don't want to hit you with one of these," Storm warned, "That would be really nasty for both of us! So I suggest you- OOF!"

As the Human Torch had been speaking he had flown closer to Spartan, a mistake to be sure. Various cast iron pipes came out of the building they were on, exhaust lines, and were easily removed if one was as strong as a surgically enhanced super soldier.

Emile dropped the melted iron pipe and sprinted to the edge of the roof and jumped, leaving behind a battered and angry member of the Fantastic Four.

He hit the rocky surface of another building after his leap and took the time he spent sprinting across the rooftop to try and get a bearing on Jun, "Three, you there?"

â€|

Noble Three poured disturbingly accurate assault rifle fire at the red and blue figure chasing him with only one hand while the other held his phone. Jun didn't even bother looking at where he was shooting, knowing that each shot was hitting exactly what he wanted it to hit, besides, he needed more concentration to try and reconnect his Bluetooth with his cell phone than to keep some lunatic dressed as a spider at bay.

"Three, you there?"

Jun smirked and slipped his phone back into his pocket, "Affirmative Four, how you doing with the lightbulb?"

"Annoying as fuck, but he ain't hard to evade," Emile said with a level of indifference, "but I get the feeling that he can keep this up all day."

"Funny, I'm getting the same feeling from my guy," Three said as he casually stepped to the side to avoid the strand of webbing coming from behind him. The black assault rifle in his hand barked in response, none of the bullets really ever in any danger of striking the nimble figure, though he dodged anyway, "There a reason we don't just kill these guys?"

"Because they aren't murderers or thieves, in fact, they aren't a threat to anyone who isn't a murderer or a thief," a new voice entered the fray.

"Nice of you to join us, Kat," the bald Spartan said with a smirk that was still hidden by the scarf wrapped around his head.

Emile grunted over the comm. line, "Now that you're here, how bout you give us a little something on these guys who're chasing us?"

"Only if you ask nicely, Noble Four," Kat's accented voice teased.

Emile huffed with exertion before responding, "Please?"

"Johnny Storm, aka the Human Torch, guess which one he is?" Kat asked rhetorically before continuing, "Result of accident with cosmic radiation, yada yada yada, boring boring boring, ah, his weakness is water. More specifically, a lot of water, I'd recommend the rain collector two buildings to the east."

"What about my guy?" Jun asked as he sidestepped another piece of webbing before responding with gunfire.

"Spider-Man, hold on, his file's a little more encrypted," Kat explained, "I hacked into some organization called SHIELD to get a little more information than Dot could give usâ€|"

Jun waited patiently, let the empty magazine drop, and slid another one in.

"Got it, wow, these encryption protocols are a joke," Noble Two said almost as if she were complaining, "His real name is Peter Parker, bit by a radioactive spider and as a result he can stick to walls like a spider, climb like a spider, has the proportional strength of a spider, and has some sort of sixth sense where he can sense danger before it happens."

"Didn't seem to be working earlier when Emile used his head as a bongo drum," Jun remarked.

"There have been instances where the danger was simply too fast for his 'spider-sense' to kick in, Four may have just been too fast. Anyway, the webbing he's shooting at you will run out, and when it does he'll have to come in close, take him out then, but preferably without killing him."

"Got it."

Suddenly a red blur swung past the Spartan, taking with it his earpiece.

"Didn't anyone ever tell you it's impolite to talk on the phone in public?"

Jun raised a hidden eyebrow before firing a few rounds he knew Spider-Man would dodge, "Nah, never came up much in training."

"Are you military?" the young hero asked as he swung across the roof using the billboard, "Or SHIELD? Why did you kill all those people?"

"Yes, no, and because they were a threat, and just for the record, I was against helping in that bank."

"Why did you have to kill them, though?" Peter asked, "And why were you against helping?"

"Didn't anyone tell you it's impolite to ask too many questions?"

"I'm serious! Why did you kill every single one of them?!"

Jun smirked and shook his head, "If you have to ask that question, then you don't, nor ever will understand."

Frustrated, the young hero pointed both of his web shooters not at the Spartan, but to both sides. He pulled the webbing taut, either ignorant of, or unconcerned by the super soldier's indifference to his current predicament, and let the elastic webbing launch him

forward feet first.

A tingling sensation crawled along Peter's scalp halfway there, "Oh shit!"

Two massive hands wrapped around Spider-Man's ankles and transferred the hero's momentum into a spinning motion, one that ended with Peter's head slamming into the metal mass of an air-conditioning unit.

The young man's enhanced durability clung to consciousness, but it simply could not clear the haze fast enough. A massive dark figure raised an object, and brought it down onto his head with tremendous force, and finally all Peter could see was darkness.

â€|

Emile fired his SOCOM into the air behind him, though the bullets melted mere nano-seconds before they could strike their target. Noble Four dropped to a slide, avoiding several fireballs as they passed harmlessly over his head. He jumped to his feet and continued his sprint across the rooftop approaching his target, a massive rain collector.

The only problem with this objective was its location, on the other side of massive six lane highway. Fortunately a solution was nearby, though any sane person probably wouldn't consider a half inch steel cord hanging from a forty foot tall crane a viable solution.

The cord was hanging nearly ten meters away from the edge of the roof, a gap that was easily crossed with his speed, though Emile purposely dropped, making sure the cord would be long enough for him to cross the street.

At the apex of his swing, Four let go, vaulting over the busy street. In midair, the Spartan twisted his body and pulled the SMG from its thigh holster. Trailing behind him was Johnny Storm, who was rather intent on some payback not only for the growing welt on the back of his head, but the bruised ribs the super soldier had given him with an iron pipe.

Both the SOCOM and the SMG opened up, spraying lead directly into the high intensity plasma field that surrounded the Human Torch, giving him his distinctive look. As the bullets neared, each one merely vaporized, though the explosive rounds from the SOCOM held a special surprise.

POP!

POP!

POP!

Each explosion felt like getting hit with a softball thrown by a major league pitcher, and the Human Torch may be a powerful superhuman, but he was still relatively human. Throwing his hands up in defense, Johnny pulled up to avoid the explosive rounds, allowing the Spartan to twist around and land facing forwards on the tall building.

Emile slid along the pea gravel of the next rooftop, digging a trench through the pebbles as he went. Four took cover behind an air duct as he checked his back pockets for another clip, only to pat down empty pockets.

"Shit," he muttered as he peeked over the reflective metal, getting a bead on his fiery adversary.

Mr. Storm was pulling around the building, building up a sizable fireball and getting ready to fling it down on the rooftop. Normally Johnny would do everything he could to talk a guy like this down, but this time he was making an exception. Rarely had the Human Torch ever been so humiliated and battered, especially by someone who wasn't even very powerful.

Spotting the man poking his head out from behind the chrome plated air duct, the Human Torch let the fireball go, hoping to strike the ground near the man and toss him around a bit. Unfortunately the man did something no sane person would do, yet again.

Emile ripped the reflective metal plate off of the air duct, and rolled out to meet the fireball head on. The ball of plasma struck the reflective chrome, but was effectively stopped by the highly resistant metal.

"That the best you got, Candlestick?" the Spartan roared at the Human Torch.

Johnny wouldn't take that lying down, "Oh not even close!"

Unfortunately, Mr. Storm was not thinking straight, and flew straight for Emile at top speed. Four merely dropped to the ground, letting the man on fire blast straight past him and into the highly flammable wood which happened to be the only thing holding back fifty thousand gallons of water.

The wood would have given way almost instantly just from the heat the Human Torch was giving off, but the fact Mr. Storm had barreled into the wall of wood at nearly fifty miles an hour meant that he was subjected to the water instantly.

Steam blasted from the hole his body had created, and for a few seconds Emile thought that it might not work, but soon water began to come out along with the steam. Finally, the steam disappeared and a blue figure was thrown from the rain collector in a waterfall that spread across the roof to the point of overflowing.

Emile waded over to the semi-submerged form of Johnny Storm and picked him up, holding him level with the Spartan's own emerald eyes.

The blonde man sputtered and coughed dirty rain water before opening his eyes to look at Emile's masked face, "Flameâ€|" COUGH, "F-flameâ€|"

Emile slammed his forehead into the Human Torch's nose, breaking it and finally knocking the young hero unconscious, "Flame off."

â€|

Thirty minutes of evasive tactics to prevent any eyes who may have been following him, Emile slid into the passenger seat of a tan truck and shut the door behind him, "Good of you guys to pick me up."

"Status?" the pale man in the driver's seat asked.

"Mission success, sir," Emile replied, "The Human Torch is laying on a rooftop, unconscious."

"So is Spider-Man," Jun said from the backseat, "Though I did mine without causing any property damage."

"My guy was on fire! Literally!"

"Children," Six put in firmly, "Stop arguing, we're headed for the Pelican fifty miles north of here. You can settle your argument on the Vengeance."

"Yes, sir," both Spartan's replied as they sank back into their respective seats.

"Did we kill Petruski?" Emile suddenly asked an hour down the road.

Daniel cocked his head, "I don't really remember. Jun?"

"I didn't kill him," the tattooed Spartan said honestly.

"I didn't either," Emile said.

"Oopsâ€|"

****And that's chapter two! Cut a little short in the end, you never really got to see what was going on up in orbit, nor was there very much on the Spartan's reactions to seeing an Earth that is full of powered individuals, but what can I do there that hasn't been done a thousand times?****

****I know I promised shorter chapters, but I couldn't help but drag this one out, especially with the battle with the villains, and the subsequent chase with the two superheroes. I had originally planned on a city wide chase involving more heroes, but I figured two Spartans knocking out two heroes good enough. I was worried about copying Harbinger of Kaos's story with the interactions between the Human Torch and Spider-Man, but I figured a massive amount of cranial trauma would be enough to distinguish my fic.****

****So I've already made a rather large impact on the Marvel Universe, I've just killed two villains and beat the shit out of two heroes, so that's always nice.****

****If your wondering what the hell is going on with the implied Peter/Carol pairing in this fic, you can thank mcknight93, he requested it, and since he did help with about ninety percent of this story, I figured I owed him one. Plus it's bound to make a few people out there happy, but don't worry, that pairing won't be central to this story, just kind of off to the side, where you can see it, but**

ignore it if you want to.**

Hope you don't mind me adding a bunch of Halo 4 weapons, they're just so cool!

So I've decided to screw with cannon just slightly, mostly the timeline. I'm thinking I'll do Secret Invasion before Civil War. I would think that Noble Team would probably be able to detect a fleet of Skrull ships headed towards Earth, not to mention with their less than gentle means they may expose quite a few Skrull agents when their corpses revert to their normal form. But I still won't be doing that particular story arc until after my own original story line, the Decimation of Hydra.

I've also got a little plot bunny nibbling at my brain, I'm considering bringing the Flood in after Secret Invasion. Perhaps the Skrull found a Covenant ship that had been stranded in the Marvel Universe. Finding the crew dead, the Skrull take a bunch of the ship's cargo including one small container that rattles every time someone gets nearâ€|

Also, I only need one last pairing, I need a guy for Kat. I've heard Captain America, I've personally thought about Hercules or Colossus, and briefly Hawkeye. I just want you to know, I won't even consider Tony Stark, not for a second. If you don't like that, well then call it writer's prerogative.

Let me know what you think in the comments, thanks for reading.

End
file.